

De Montfort University - Leicester  
International Centre for Sport History and Culture

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**The Age of Innocence**  
**A History of the Relationship between**  
**Football Authorities and the BBC**  
**Television Service, 1937-82**

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Football Authorities and the BBC Television  
Service, 1937-82**

**A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of De Montfort University for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy**



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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the relationship between football authorities, namely the Football Association and the Football League, and the BBC Television service (and to some extent ITV) from 1937 to 1982. The aim of the study is to outline the general physiognomy of the football/television system in Britain throughout the 45-year period in question.

The study concentrates on two areas of interest. The first is the historical evolution of the relationship between football and TV, analysing the aspects related to negotiations, programming and production of televised football, as well as the competition (since 1955) between the BBC and commercial television. The second concentrates on the televising of the 1966 World Cup, considered a fundamental moment in the construction of televised football in England.

The main source of this study was the BBC Written Archives Centre. However, a detailed press review and a survey of specialised literature proved essential to the writing of this thesis, too.

As far as the first area of interest of the research is concerned, the key findings demonstrate how the 'symbiotic' relationship that has developed between football and TV over the last 20 years was preceded by a long period of tension and misunderstanding. In particular, while the FA proved to be quite positive towards live televising of the game right from the start, the League always manifested its sound opposition, forcing the BBC and ITV to concentrate their football programming on recorded highlights only. Nonetheless, that was the

period in which the seeds of the current situation were sown; therefore the comprehension of the crucial moments characterising the historical development during the time-span analysed can be very helpful in understanding today's symbiosis between football and television in Britain.

Regarding the TV coverage of the 1966 World Cup, the analysis carried out on the aspects related to production and programming by both the BBC and ITV, as well as on the consumption patterns of the audience, demonstrates how the televising of that particular major football competition marked the beginning of a mutually advantageous bond.

**Key words:** BBC – football – television – mass media – FA – Football League – World Cup



## *Acknowledgments*

It was a rainy winter night in Leicester. I was having dinner in a restaurant with Pierre Lanfranchi and Matt Taylor. Suddenly, out of the blue, they came out with the suggestion that in their opinion I would be the right person to work on a PhD project regarding the history of the relationship between football and television authorities. They thought I should have a go at De Montfort University submitting a research project to the International Centre for Sport History and Culture (ICSHC) in order to get a PhD. I was delighted at the proposal, and I did not sleep the whole night (I actually spent the night to write a long letter to my mother). Next August I was having my interview, and shortly after I was already working on the project. Therefore, Pierre Lanfranchi and Matt Taylor are the very first two people that I want to thank, because without their initial spur and their successive help throughout the research and the writing of this thesis I would not have been able to work on this project.

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## **Abbreviations**

**ABC:** Associated British Corporation Television Ltd  
**AGM:** Annual General Meeting  
**APCS:** Associations for the Protection of Copyright in Sport  
**ATV:** Associated Television Ltd  
**BBC:** British Broadcasting Corporation  
**BBC WAC:** British Broadcasting Corporation Written Archives Centre  
**CCTV:** Closed Circuit Television  
**CNN:** Cable News Network  
**EBU:** European Broadcasting Union  
**EEC:** European Economic Community  
**FA:** Football Association  
**FIFA:** Fédération Internationale de Football Association  
**IBA:** Independent Broadcasting Authority  
**IOC:** International Olympic Committee  
**ITA:** Independent Television Authority  
**ITC:** Independent Television Commission  
**ITN:** Independent Television News  
**ITV:** Independent Television  
**LWT:** London Weekend Television  
**MOTD:** Match of the Day  
**OB:** Outside Broadcasts  
**PFA:** Players Footballers' Association  
**TNA:** The National Archives  
**TTT:** Tyne Tees Television  
**UEFA:** Union of European Football Associations  
**UHF:** Ultra High Frequency  
**VHF:** Very High Frequency

# **The Age of Innocence**

**A History of the Relationship between  
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## Introduction

### *Negotiating and Televising Football in 'The Age of Innocence'*

The advance of technology along with a certain condition of affluence that has affected the western world in the second half of the twentieth century, the so called 'consumer society', have led to the creation of a mass culture that has been defined 'popular culture'. As Loy, McPherson and Kenyon say,

'Sport has become one of the major forms of this popular culture (along with popular music, movies, and television shows), primarily through its association with the dominant form of the media in each era. As a result a symbiotic relationship between sport and the media has evolved in order to satiate the demands of the masses who seek to indirectly consume sport for a variety of real or imagined reasons.'<sup>1</sup>.

If on the one hand the media have always tried to exploit to the utmost the potential allure of sport as an instrument to capture as much audience or readership as possible, on the other hand many sports have developed, throughout the years, a sort of dependency on the media in order to extend their appeal and popularity as well to expand their potential in terms of commercialisation. As Jay Coakley underlines,

'Without media coverage, the popularity and revenue-generating potential of commercial spectator sports would be seriously limited. Information about events generates interest, and interest generates revenues from the sale of tickets, luxury boxes, club seats, concessions, parking, team logo merchandise, and licensing rights.'<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Loy, John W./McPherson, Barry/Kenyon, Gerald (eds.), *Sport and Social Systems*, Reading (Mass.): 1978, p. 304.

<sup>2</sup> Coakley, Jay J., *Sport in Society. Issues & Controversies*, Boston: 1998, p. 371.

Among all the forms of the mass-media, television can be recognized without any shadow of doubt as the 'dominant' medium in the last 40 years; and sports coverage has always been a perfect item of entertainment for the audience for different reasons. John Hargreaves wrote in 1986:

'Sport not only attracts large audiences, it does so relatively cheaply. Expensive as it may be in terms of absolute costs (satellite charges, rights, etc.), the high unit costs per hour for the very high ratings gained, compare favourably with drama and light entertainment: in these terms an hour of drama is three times as expensive as an hour of the World Cup.'<sup>3</sup>.

It is true that in the last 20 years things have changed, and fees to get TV rights for major sporting events have risen to extraordinary peaks; although, it is evident that the differences between costs and benefits for television organisations are still in favour of the latter, especially in consideration of the fact that sport programming is a major weapon in the ratings war between competing TV companies.

However, the 'symbiotic relationship' that has developed between television and sport has not been a liaison without any kind of tension. As Richard Haynes puts it,

'the relationship between sport and television has not always been sanguine and throughout their historical association the struggles over the representation of sport through the lens of the camera and the microphone (... ) have often proved volatile.'<sup>4</sup>.

If it cannot be denied that TV is surely the most powerful and invasive medium, football is undoubtedly the most popular and attractive sport, at least in three and a half of the five continents. Football is a TV sport *par excellence*. A

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<sup>3</sup> Hargreaves, John, *Sport, Power and Culture: A Social and Historical Analysis of Popular Sports in Britain*, Cambridge: 1986, p. 140.

<sup>4</sup> Boyle, Raymond/Haynes, Richard, *Power Play. Sport, the Media and Popular Culture*, London: 2000, p. 39.

football game is an event that happens at a precise and foreseeable moment; it lasts always more or less two hours; it takes place in a precise place where cameras can be set well in advance to the best of their utilisation; it is very popular among the viewers; and, most importantly, the final result of each single game is unpredictable and nobody knows in advance who is going to win. In a few words, a football game is a perfect 'trap' placed to capture the audience.

But before the mutual exchange of advantages took over, there were fears and misunderstandings by football organisers and authorities towards the new medium. The football tide that is flooding us nowadays is a very late conquest by TV broadcasters. Until the '80s, football on TV was only for a few and very important games, such as Cup Finals (F.A. – European Cup), international games and, of course, European Championships and the FIFA World Cup. No League matches were shown live. The football authorities had two main worries: the first was of an economic nature, given the feared likely loss in gates due to the competition of 'live' television broadcasting; the second, that came a little later, was caused by the fear that TV would take over the organisation of sports by changing the rules, setting the schedules, and so on, in order to suit its necessities of budget, listings, etc. Eventually, though, it was widely understood that this was a relationship in which the one needed the other in a reciprocal way: football needed TV for a stronger impact on the masses ('no element of the twentieth century life has played a more significant role in promoting sports interest than



TV', as highlighted by Monnington<sup>5</sup>); TV needed football at first in order to spread its diffusion among the population ('watching the sport was often given as the main reason for buying a TV set in the late 1950s and early in the 1960s', and 'the week before the Cup Final was a time when both retailers and rental companies did particularly good business', as highlighted by Tony Mason<sup>6</sup>); then to enhance its figures in terms of audience and, as in the case of commercial television, of financial income.

### **The frame and the aims**

The main aim of this research is to explore the relationship between football and the BBC Television service with a historical approach. As Martin Polley has argued, a historical approach not only can help to understand how sports were shaped in the past by its political and economic developments, but it is also indispensable because it can show 'long and short-term trends that are not always visible to present-centred disciplinary approaches'<sup>7</sup>.

This work concentrates on two main focuses. The first one is on the historical development of the negotiations regarding the relationship between football authorities and the BBC Television service since the very beginning of TV broadcasting in the second half of the '30s. The second focus of this study is on a fundamental moment in the construction of televised football as an

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<sup>5</sup> Monnington, Terence, et al., *British Sports in the Seventies: an Assessment of Some Factors Affecting Sports and Physical Recreation in Great Britain*, Warwick: 1975, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Mason, Tony, *Sport in Britain*, London: 1988, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> Polley, Martin, *Moving the Goalposts*, London: 1998, p. 9.

inescapable part of the social history of England: the televising of the 1966 World Cup, when football 'came home'.

1982 has been chosen as the closing point of this research because it can be considered as a watershed year as far as football on TV is concerned. Firstly, in 1982, for the first time since their introduction, there is a decrease in respect to the previous year in the total number of TV licences, probably meaning that maximum diffusion of television in the country had been reached<sup>8</sup>. Secondly, since October 1981 the company Satellite Television UK (SATV) had began test transmissions of a direct-to-home satellite service, tests that were carried out throughout 1982<sup>9</sup>; and since late 1981 there were the first experiments of pay TV<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, with the birth of Channel Four in November 1982, there was the appearance of a further competitor in the panorama of British television. Finally, last but definitely not least, since 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1983, there was the regular live televising of League football thanks to an agreement between the League and a cartel including both the BBC and ITV<sup>11</sup>.

The original aim of this thesis was to compare and contrast the historical development of the relationship between football and television in Britain with

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<sup>8</sup> There were 18,667,211 TV licences in 1981; this number lowered to 18,554,220 in 1982.

<sup>9</sup> Those experimental transmissions broadcast British programmes broadcast, through the OTS-2 Orbital Test Satellite, to 200,000 homes in some European countries, such as in Norway, Finland, Switzerland, and Malta. Actually SATV had begun its service of satellite direct broadcast late in the '70s, but being without a UK broadcasting licence, retransmitted some US content and low-cost programming from the Netherlands. The company, though, was a lossmaking enterprise, and in 1982 Rupert Murdoch's News International acquired 80% of the company for the sum of £1 plus outstanding debts. The service was then renamed Sky Channel.

<sup>10</sup> The first network was Rediffusion Starview in Reading, Burnley, Hull, Pontypridd and Tunbridge Wells. The experiment started on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1981, the subscription rate varying between £7.95 and £11.95. Soon after, many other competitors turned up in the London area, in the Midlands and in Northamptonshire.

<sup>11</sup> The opening game of this new era was Tottenham Hotspur v. Nottingham Forrest, with the Spurs securing a 2-1 win before ITV cameras.

that in Italy, another European country where both football and TV play an important role within the wider area of popular culture. The final goal was to build a comparative history of football on TV in both Britain and Italy by drawing the general physiognomy of each single system, as well as to find out whether it would be possible to spot a common pattern that could be considered as a system of reference in the general context of the relations between football and TV in Europe, or, on the contrary, if there are so many differences that national systems of culture and economy overcome the possibility to build a general pattern.

Unfortunately, though, the initial project had to be forsaken due to the clear difference of balance between the material gathered during the research in the two countries in question, with an overwhelming superiority, both in quantity and quality, of the English side, and in particular of the first hand sources found at the BBC Written Archives Centre. The subsequent decision was then to abandon the comparative aspect and to concentrate on the historical development of the bond between football and television in England through the lenses of the BBC.

### **The question marks**

Before starting the research work at the archives, the first thing to do was to concentrate on the questions this work should try to answer, seeking to follow a historical approach. Some of the questions were more general: how important had pioneering pre-war television been in popularising football? How important was TV in the post-war years among the people? What was the role of television in the perception of association football as the ‘people’s game’? These were quite basic



questions, and could substantially be answered according to the information coming from the existing literature. Some other questions, though, were much more specific and required an in-depth investigation carried out mainly through primary sources, either from archives or from the press: when did football start to be televised on a regular basis? On the basis of what kind of deals? Which were the reactions from the football authorities in regard to the interest shown in their sport by TV services? What was viewers' feedback like? Why had football so much more coverage than other sports? Has TV ever affected attendances? Has TV changed the game? Has football affected the development of TV?

Of course it was not expected that the primary sources would give answers meeting the entire lot of questions; but those question marks were a necessary starting point in order not to be overwhelmed by a huge mass of information without any idea of how to use it. The final goal of this research is to draw a general physiognomy of the football/television system in Britain throughout what it has been decided to define as the 'age of innocence', when relationships between football authorities and television services still used to have quite a naïve approach to the matter, especially in comparison to what happened in later years. The huge amount of first hand material that it was possible to gather during the research work has allowed the drawing of quite a complete picture of the situation.

Another aim of this study is to pinpoint the importance of televised football as a fundamental factor of the popular culture in contemporary England. The televising of the 1966 World Cup has been considered as the paradigm of this

relevant feature; therefore, it was decided to dedicate an entire section of this research to the analysis of the televising of that particular event.

Finally, another purpose of this work is to supply information that could be helpful for further studies on all the related issues, giving hints for possible spin-off investigations.

## **Literature Review**

As far as the existing literature on the topic is concerned there are two levels of academic researches. The wider level is the one in which the liaison between sports and the media, TV in particular, is explored. A more detailed level is the one in which the object of investigation is the relationship between football and TV. While the first level can count on several monographs and on many chapters in books in the field of media studies, as well as a large number of articles in various journals, little has been published in relation to the second one.

As Bernstein and Blain say in an article published in a recent issue of *Culture, Sport, Society*,

‘the study of the ways in which media and sport interact crosses boundaries and can be found in literature concerned with the sociology of sport, history of sport, gender studies, cultural studies, journalism, leisure studies and beyond.’<sup>12</sup>.

If we consider the large literature which has been published in the last 10/15 years on the topic, we find this is no exaggeration. Since Benjamin Rader’s pioneering book *In Its Own Image. How Television has Transformed Sports* was published in

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<sup>12</sup> Bernstein/Blain, Neil, ‘Sport and the Media: The Emergence of a Major Research Field’, in *Culture, Sport and Society*, vol. 5 (3), Autumn 2002, p. 1.



1984<sup>13</sup>, in which the evolution of American sports through their relations with commercial TV is analysed, the study area has moved many steps forward.

Before and throughout the '80s this bond was just the subject of a few monographs and chapters within general books on the media or on TV, like Roy Peters's<sup>14</sup> and Stephen Bindman's<sup>15</sup>, or of some articles in specialised journals, the most relevant being Peter McIntosh's<sup>16</sup>, Clarke and Clarke's<sup>17</sup>, and Garry Whannel's<sup>18</sup>. But it has since become a major issue in the field of popular culture, of which it can be considered a sort of paradigm; and in the '90s there has been a slow but continuous flow of monographs dedicated to the topic as well as many articles, papers and specialist issues of journals and reviews.

Sociologists and scholars in the area of cultural studies have surely been the ones who have shown the major interest in the analysis of this relationship,

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<sup>13</sup> Rader, Benjamin G., *In Its Own Image - How Television Has Transformed Sports*, New York: 1984.

<sup>14</sup> Peters, Roy, *Television Coverage of Sport*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1976.

<sup>15</sup> Bindman, Stephen, *The Role of the Media in Sport*, in Partington, John T./Orlick, Terry/Salmela, John H. (eds.), *Sport in Perspective*, Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1982, pp. 52-64.

<sup>16</sup> McIntosh, Peter C., 'Mass Media: Friends or Foes in Sport', in *Quest*, Vol. 22, June 1974, pp. 33-44.

<sup>17</sup> Clarke, Alan/Clarke, John, "'Highlights and action replays" - Ideology, Sport and the Media', in Hargreaves, Jennifer (ed.), *Sport, Culture and Ideology*, London: 1985, pp. 62-87. By John Clarke see also: Clarke, J., 'Televising football: issues in popular culture', in Tomlinson, Alan (ed.), *Explorations in Football Culture*, Brighton: Leisure Studies Association, 1983, pp. 197-202.

<sup>18</sup> Whannel, Garry, 'The Unholy Alliance: notes on television and the remaking of British sport 1965-85', in *Leisure Studies*, 5, May 1986, pp. 129-145. Further works related to the matter of the relationship between sport and the media were carried out more or less in the same years also in other countries, especially in North America, Italy and France. See: Smith, Garry J./Blackman, Cynthia, *Sport in the Mass Media*, Ottawa: University of Calgary, 1978; Greendorfer, Susan H., 'Sport and the mass-media', in Luschen, Gunther/Sage, George H. (eds.), *Handbook of Social Science of Sport*, Champaign (Illinois): Stipes, 1981, pp. 160-180; Cantelon, H./Gruneau, R., 'The Productions of Sport for Television', in Harvey, J./Cantelon, H. (eds.), *Not Just a Game*, Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988; Iozzia, Giovanni/Minerva, Luciano, *Un matrimonio d'interesse. Sport e televisione*, Torino: ERI, 1986; Colombo, Fausto, 'Lo spettacolo dello sport', in Bettetini, Gianfranco/Grasso, Aldo (eds.), *Lo specchio sporco della Televisione*, Torino: Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 1988, pp. 353-391; Bourg, Jean-François, 'Aspects économiques des relations entre le sport et la télévision', in *Médiaspouvoirs*, n° 23 (1991); Bourg, J.F., 'Le sport et la television: économie des relations', in *Revue Juridique et économique du sport*, n° 19, (1991); Faure, Roland, *Le sport et la télévision: analyse, avis et propositions*, Paris: CSA, 1991.

especially as far as concepts like masculinity, identity, nationalism, and consumption are concerned. In particular, some of the most interesting works are the one by Blain, Boyle and O'Donnell on the building of national identities in Europe thanks to the way the media represent sport<sup>19</sup>, as well as the pioneering book written by John Goldlust in the late '80s on the way television 'colonised modern sporting cultures'<sup>20</sup>, and the ones edited by Lawrence Wenner<sup>21</sup>.

There has been, too, a good deal of studies that have focused on the semiotic side related to the way TV can manipulate the perception of the actual event, involving what has been defined by Clarke and Clarke as 'an active process of re-presentation', in which what is seen by the viewers 'is not the event, but the event transformed into something else'<sup>22</sup>. This is the case of an American book by Joan Chandler, *Television and National Sport: the United States and Britain* (incidentally, the only study written with a comparative intent), in which the author underlines how TV has taught the audience 'to know what the best in sport is and to expect it'<sup>23</sup>.

Other important aspects of this relationship, such as the processes of commercialisation and 'commodification' of sports, have been largely studied by scholars of economic, sociology and sports studies, the latter being very interested in the issue related to the loss of the original aims of leisure and physical

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<sup>19</sup> Blain, Neil/Boyle, Raymond/O'Donnell, H., *Sport and National Identity in the European Media*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993.

<sup>20</sup> Goldlust, John, *Playing for Keeps - Sport, the Media and Society*, Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1987.

<sup>21</sup> Wenner, Lawrence A. (ed.), *Media, Sports and Society*, London: Sage, 1989; Wenner, L. A. (ed.), *Mediasport*, London: Sage, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Clarke/Clarke, "Highlights and action replays"...', p. 70.

<sup>23</sup> Chandler, Joan M., *Television and National Sport: the United States and Britain*, Urbana: 1988, p. xii.



recreation and education. The most interesting attempts can be considered Garry Whannel's ones, especially his celebrated *Fields in Vision*, in which he mainly focuses on cultural aspects<sup>24</sup>, as well as his study where he analyses the impact of some sport programmes such as BBC's *Grandstand* on the habits of British audience<sup>25</sup>. David Rowe's work<sup>26</sup> on the connections among sport, culture and the media is worth mentioning too.

Regarding the approach to the subject made by academics in the field of contemporary social history, not only has this relationship been a neglected area for the general historians, who have rarely considered this topic as worthy of more than a few lines, but even the historians of sport, except in some recent works like Holt and Mason's *Sport in Britain. 1945-2000*<sup>27</sup> or in Jeff Hill's study on social and cultural aspects of 20<sup>th</sup> century British sport<sup>28</sup>, have very often overlooked this topic. If we wanted to point out the very few works in which sport and the media, and TV in particular, have been studied with a historical approach, we would not have to go to such a big effort. As a matter of fact, apart from very brief hints in general studies, where always the same kind of information is given (mainly coming from Briggs' ponderous history of broadcasting in Britain<sup>29</sup>, and from the more recent Steven Barnett's *Games and Sets*, especially in the chapter where the

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<sup>24</sup> Whannel, G., *Fields in Vision. Television Sport and Cultural Transformation*, London: 1992.

<sup>25</sup> Whannel, G., "'Grandstand', the Sports Fan and the Family Audience', in Corner, John (ed.), *Popular Television in Britain*, London 1991, pp. 182-196.

<sup>26</sup> Rowe, D., *Sport, Culture and the Media: the Unholy Trinity*, Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2004. By the same author see also: Rowe, D., 'The Global Love-match: Sport and Television', in *Media, Culture & Society*, 1996, Vol. 18, pp. 564-582.

<sup>27</sup> Holt, Richard/Mason, Tony, *Sport in Britain. 1945-2000*, London: 2001 (in particular see chapter 5).

<sup>28</sup> Hill, Jeffrey, *Sport, Leisure and Culture in Twentieth-Century Britain*, Basingstoke: Pakgrave Macmillan, 2002 (in particular see chapter 3 and chapter 6).

<sup>29</sup> Briggs, Asa, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, five vols, Oxford: 1961-95.

history of televised sport in Britain since the early days is analysed<sup>30</sup>), no particular interest has been shown in what can be considered as a black spot in the context of the history of both sport and Television. Therefore, curiously, the most important benchmark in the field of historical studies on the relation between sport and TV remains the very first work by Rader (which was not properly academic and was focused on the US).

Talking in particular of the relationship between football and TV, there have been, of course, some autobiographies by football commentators, such as Kenneth Wolstenholme's<sup>31</sup>, Brian Moore's<sup>32</sup>, and Archie MacPherson's<sup>33</sup>, in which personal experiences and televised football are intertwined, or Moore's and Motson's books on the two most famous football programmes in Britain (*The Big Match* and *Match of the Day*)<sup>34</sup>. They can be considered as sources rather than interpretations of this bond, though, mainly due to their journalistic style and their apologetic intent.

Even the earliest attempt at studying the nature of televised football with a scholarly approach, made by Edward Buscombe for the British Film Institute in 1974, focused mainly on the televising of 1974 Football World Cup<sup>35</sup>, talking about the 'present situation' and not giving us any help in understanding how that televised event can be inserted in the historic flow of televising of football in

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<sup>30</sup> Barnett, Steven, *Games and Sets. The Changing Face of Sport on Television*, London: 1990 (in particular see chapter 1).

<sup>31</sup> Wolstenholme, Kenneth, *They think it's all over...Memories of the Greatest Day in English Football*, London: 1998; and Wolstenholme, K., *50 sporting years and it's still not all over*, London: 1999.

<sup>32</sup> Moore, Brian, *The Final Score. The Autobiography of the Voice of Football*, London: 2000.

<sup>33</sup> MacPherson, Archie, *Action Replays*, London: 1991.

<sup>34</sup> Moore, B./Tyler, Martin, *The Big Matches*, London: 1980; and Motson, John, *Match of the Day: the complete record since 1964*, London: 1994.

<sup>35</sup> Buscombe, Edward, *Football on Television*, London: 1975.



general. A more academic approach characterises the recent works by Richard Haynes, who developed some findings on the history of television broadcasting of football in Britain out of his PhD thesis *Sport for the Slothful? A Study of Televised Football in Britain* in the book he wrote along with Raymond Boyle<sup>36</sup>.

In conclusion, if a discrete amount of research has been conducted in relation to a history of televised football, very little has so far been developed as far as 'football on television' is concerned.

### **Primary sources: the archives and the press**

After this glance at the situation of the existing literature on the topic, let us now focus on the actual material that helped us to structure a research aimed at fill the existing gaps in this study area: credible, substantial and consistent primary sources.

The main and most interesting features of the research have been the sources from the BBC Written Archive Centre, located adjacent the BBC Monitoring Service at Reading. In that archive there has been the chance to go through a wonderful amount of primary information related to all of the three main areas that constitute the spine of this study: policies of negotiation; programming and production; and audience figures and patterns. The most interesting material has been that concerned with the negotiations between the football authorities and the BBC, recorded in a huge correspondence between these two parties. The main consequences of going through that huge amount of useful material were that this

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<sup>36</sup> Boyle/Haynes, *Power Play...* , chapter 2.

archive became the main primary source for this research and that, most of all, a decision was taken to shift the focus of this study to the relationship between football authorities and the BBC from the Corporation's point of view.

The FA Archives did not reveal any 'extraordinary' finding, at least as far as negotiations with the BBC are concerned; but they have proved fundamental for the building of the second part of this work, providing the '1966 World Cup Organising Committee Minutes' and some very interesting private letters addressed to Sir Alf Ramsey to congratulate him for the World Cup triumph. Interesting information has been provided by The National Archives, especially as far as the question of copyright is concerned. The Football League and Independent Television, unfortunately, have no organised written archives available to researchers, yet.

The other main primary source for this research has been the press, especially where it has been used to cover the 'black holes' in the archival material, and for the second half of the Seventies, when it was almost impossible to have any kind of information from archives due to the exclusivity clause, which prevented us (as well as any other researcher) from having the chance to go through archive material related to the last 30 years. Research on the press has been carried out mainly at the British Library Newspaper Library, based at Colindale. Principal sources have been: *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*, which have been considered the most authoritative and reliable national daily newspapers; and *The Listener*, one of the most thorough journals in the field of television criticism. Many other newspapers and periodicals have been analysed,



too, in order to build this work with the utmost consistency, credibility and precision. For instance, the *Radio Times* and the *TV Times* have been examined in order to better assess TV schedules as well as schemes of production and programming by both the BBC and ITV as far as football was concerned. Furthermore, some regional newspapers have been checked out to have a clearer picture of particular events (e.g. for the first televised game ever between Blackpool and Bolton in 1960).

Once the archive research and the press review began, all the material collected was filed according to its link with one of the three main areas above mentioned. The first one was related to the development of the ‘political’ relationship between football authorities and TV services, in which all the correspondence, the contracts, the internal memos, etc., have been collected. The second section was more connected to the actual television coverage of football: programming, technological improvement, general organisation, financial involvement, coverage of ‘big events’. Finally, a third file gathered all the information related to the viewers and to the social effects of televised football: audience figures, patterns of consumption, fandom, gender issues, and participation. The reading of the following pages will show how the idea that the neglected history of the negotiations between the BBC and the football authorities would prove to be like the thread given by Ariadne to Theseus was the right one in order to find the way out of the intricate maze constituted by all the issues regarding the development of the relationship between football and television in Britain in those ‘formative’ years.

## **Negotiating football in 'The Age of Innocence'**

According to the material gathered from the archives, the newspapers and the existing literature on the topic, the 45 years covered by this study can be split in three main phases, each one having its distinctive features. Chapter I focuses on the first phase, framed between the pre-war TV broadcasting and 1953, the year of the famous 'Stanley Matthews' Coronation Cup', as well as the last year of the official BBC monopoly (following the Television Act of 1954 that opened the door to independent commercial television). In the pre-war years the BBC realised the huge potential of televising football, in spite of the technical difficulties surrounding outside broadcast units; on the other hand the football authorities, the FA especially, saw in TV broadcasting an occasion not to be lost in order to spread the popularity of the game. Those were the years of the first FA Cup Finals to be broadcast live on TV, the very first being televised 'live' on 30 April 1938, just a fortnight after the first international ever to be televised, an England v. Scotland clash for the Home Championship, had been broadcast. During this period a very strong alliance between the Corporation and the FA, then chaired by Stanley Rous (a personality who always proved positive towards the bond between football and television), can be spotted. The Football League, instead, showed from the very beginning a negative attitude, due mainly to the strong conservative approach to the commercialisation of the game taken by the League's Management Committee. Eventually, in the post-war years the League managed to tow the FA closer to their position, leading to the decision not to allow live television broadcasting of the 1951 FA Cup Final and no television



coverage at all of the 1952 one. This was the end of that enthusiastic as well as naïve period.

The second phase, between 1954 and 1964, is the most troubled one, and is the focus of Chapter II. Those were the years of the new competition in the field of TV broadcasting, thanks to the ‘special’ feature of Independent Television. This competition brought a new character on the stage: money. The struggle to get the rights for television broadcasting from both the FA and the League became harsher and harsher, and eventually led to some gains, even if marginal. During this phase competition did not lead to the obtaining of the main goal both television services struggled for: live League football; but it led to one important result: the broadcasting, in 1964, of probably the most important TV programme on football in Britain, BBC’s *Match of the Day*.

If on the one hand the BBC Outside Broadcasts (OB) department, the BBC’s section in charge of TV broadcasting of sport, was struggling to have live football in the BBC programming, on the other hand football authorities, especially the League, were absolutely opposed to the live televising of football, mainly because of their worries of loss of revenue from the gates. TV services did not have much money to pour into buying copyright of football, nor could League clubs’ boards even think of having their possible losses in gates covered by TV money. But ITV, aka competition, was just around the corner... Therefore, even though the BBC managers, in particular new OB Head Peter Dimmock, struggled in order to get long term contracts for exclusive rights to cover the main sporting events just before the arrival of the competitor, League Football was an important piece

missing in their collection. Although, apart from a unique case in September 1960, when a League match between Blackpool and Bolton was televised live by Independent Television (it would remain the one and only 'live' televising of a League match for many, many years to come), ITV did not become a serious threat to the leading position of the BBC at least until the late Sixties, when a special centralised sport department was finally set up by the Independent Television Authority (ITA). In those years the role principally played by ITV was to disturb BBC's plans in dealing with the football authorities.

The third period, which is analysed in Chapter III, runs from summer 1964 to 1982 and can be split in two different sub-phases. The first sub-phase, from 1964 to 1973, can be considered as a transitory stage, during which the contenders seemed to rest after years of an exhausting war; while, at the same time, preparing for a new one. Those were the years of BBC's *Match of the Day*, which means that TV football mainly consisted of 'highlights' rather than being shown 'live'. But this does not necessarily mean that everything was in a state of lethargy. In particular there was the 1966 World Cup, and as far as the relationship between football and television is concerned, that meant mainly two things: firstly, a fair collaboration between the BBC and commercial television, which, though, inevitably led to a decisive growth of the latter in terms of quality and thus, consequently, to an even tougher competition in the years to come. Secondly, the televising of the World Cup represented an indelible benchmark in the manner of conceiving televised football, or, better, in the way that the audience could no longer conceive of football without television.



The final battle of this war was fought in the years between 1974 and 1982, when various and tremendous assaults were aimed at the fortress of League football. And, eventually, the BBC and ITV got what they had desired: live League football on TV. But as far as this study is concerned, the negotiation to achieve this goal has not been investigated, mainly due to actual lack of archive documentation.

### **Televising a major event: the 1966 World Cup**

The main purpose of Chapter IV is to highlight the relevance of the 1966 World Cup in contemporary English culture. In spite of the huge impact that that famous victory had, and still has, on English popular culture, it has been a very much understudied topic by academics. An example of this overlooking might be the lack of attention given to the event (and to football in general) in one of the more important benchmarks of contemporary social history, Arthur Marwick's *The Sixties*<sup>37</sup>.

Would the tournament itself have been the same without the intervention of television? Would the popular perception of the competition and the delight in the final triumph have been equally enthusiastic if there had not been such massive television coverage? Would Alf Ramsey's lads' victory have been the same if it had not been achieved in front of audience figures of more than 20 millions? This chapter, after having presented briefly the history of the televising in Britain of the FIFA World Cup since 1954 (the very first time the competition,

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<sup>37</sup> Marwick, Arthur, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, c.1958-c.1974*, Oxford: 1998.

on that occasion played in Switzerland, was televised) till the 1962 edition staged in Chile, the one immediately preceding the tournament held in England, tries to give some answers to these questions, as well as to take on other relevant issues related to technological developments in sports (but not only) TV broadcasting, and to the intervention of TV in the overall organisation and scheduling of a major sporting event such as the football World Cup.

### **Related issues**

Intertwined with the two main focuses of this research, the history of the negotiations for the televising of domestic football and the TV production and programming of the 1966 World Cup, are many other related issues. This study tries to highlight the ones that have been considered of major relevance to the project.

Among these related issues, an aspect that must be considered very carefully is regarding coverage and programming of football on British TV. The main thing that can be immediately said is that programming has always depended on the negotiations between football and TV authorities, being a mere reflection of them. If on the one hand football authorities always pushed towards the direction of recorded pictures of the game, TV broadcasters have always been keen to get live pictures, relying on the obvious consideration that a live football match has much more power of luring larger audience figures. Thus there were cases, especially in the post-war years, when the BBC would broadcast live pictures of Corinthian League games rather than filmed League and FA games, considering a football



game 'as it takes place' much better television than a filmed one, regardless of its quality. Of course this might have been a reflection of an interest in amateur football that was not over yet in those years, but it looked like a move just to show 'live' football, regardless of its quality. This experiment did not last very long, though, probably showing the lack of interest by the audience in the televising of low quality level.

Friendly floodlit games were another common feature in the '50s, especially for ITV, but they also caused a turbulent relationship between TV organisations and the League. Internationals were another important feature within television football coverage. This was probably a factor that helped both to build a sense of national identity through football and to widen the horizons of the game well beyond the national boundaries; and in this sense the 1966 World Cup was undoubtedly a turning point.

A fundamental issue that cannot be overlooked is the one regarding the birth and development of all those special programmes, such as *Match of the Day*, first broadcast on BBC2 on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1964, and *The Big Match*, launched by ITV in 1968. The main feature of those programmes was the showing of the highlights of the more relevant games played at weekends. Both *Match of the Day* and *The Big Match* played the fundamental role of making football authorities happy, especially the League and the Clubs, as well as TV broadcasters, not to mention the football enthusiast viewers. From clubs' point of view not only did these programmes not affect negatively the attendances at the grounds, but they were also very helpful in promoting the game and in spreading its popularity. TV

people were happy too, given that the possibility of broadcasting pictures of selected League games would attract a much wider audience, and in any case showing just the highlights would avoid the danger of boring the audience, giving them the opportunity to watch the most entertaining bits of every televised game. It was not just a public service, but it was also great entertainment: this is probably the reason that explains the long-lasting success of those programmes.

The same kind of success cannot be awarded to any other attempt to set football programmes that were not based on live or highlighted pictures of the game, but just on the 'studio' talks about it (a different discourse ought be made for the *FA Cup Final Special* programmes, though). This was mainly due to the reason that the audience did not care much for something different from the actual game, and the interest on the 'behind-the-scenes' events was left to the press, which on the other hand had concentrated its efforts mainly in this direction since competition with TV had started. This can probably explain the sporadic scheduling of this sort of special programmes (such as those dedicated to previews or post-mortem analysis), mainly on the occasion of major football events such as the FIFA World Cup.

Another feature of this study is regarding the people involved in the construction of the link between football and television: producers; commentators; Heads of departments; Secretaries and Presidents of associations, leagues, unions or clubs, etc. The development of the football/television bond is due mainly to the engagement and involvement of a huge number of people, regardless of their being in favour or not of the growth of this relationship.



A further important issue relates to the technological advances involved in the process of offering the viewers the best possible show. From the very early years onwards the technical issue has always been one of the main concerns of television organisations, especially if we consider the poor quality of technology that characterised the very first devices used for TV broadcasting. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the BBC OB department has always sought to provide the best possible coverage, and it can be said that the organisation of mobile units packed in specially equipped vans that could feed to the central transmitter based in Alexandra Palace developed with scientific precision purposely for the coverage of football games and other 'national' sporting events, such as the Boat Race, Wimbledon, etc. For instance, one major technical improvement, the development of multi-lens cameras, was probably spurred by the practical need for such a device (even though this cannot be proven with evidence).

It is certain, though, that one of the greatest leaps in terms of television technology was made purposely for football coverage: the slow-motion replay, developed by BBC engineers on the occasion of the 1966 World Cup. Intercontinental satellite transmission was also improved thanks to its consistent utilisation for major sporting events, and the 1966 World Cup was very important in the development of the quality of intercontinental TV picture exchange. Colour television was another of the technical developments pushed by football coverage; here, the 1966 World Cup, which was broadcast in black and white, could have been the watershed, had not it been stopped by technical difficulties linked with

the choice of a common European system for colour TV. But by 1970 both colour TV and satellite transmission, along with the slow-motion system, were regular features of the World Cup coverage from Mexico, coming soon after the wonderful success of 1968 Olympics coverage from Mexico City. A final mention has to be made about the development and commercial success of another device that began to be popular in concomitance with the 1974 World Cup: the Video-Tape-Recorder. The invention of the slow-motion machine as well as of all the other devices gives further evidence of the fact that major sporting events have always been the best engine for technological improvements in TV production and broadcasting.

Last, but not least, some attention is paid to the audience: figures, patterns, gender, terms and times of consumption, and so on. Despite all those who believe that it has been TV that has shaped the patterns of viewing and consumption of the audience, it can be said that there has always been a two-way channel of exchange, with the audience sometimes forcing TV producers to reshape their ideas about football coverage and programming. If there have been many times when the influence and the direct intervention of TV changed the game (kick-off tunes, scheduling of matches, colour of the ball, colour of the shirt, behaviour of players on and off the pitch, and so on), it must be admitted that those interventions never went too far, in order not excessively to shock the expectations of the viewers.

**Part One**

***Football and Television,  
1937-82***



*'I don't remember Saturday evening, but I know that on the Sunday, Mother's Day, I elected to go to church rather than stay at home, where there was a danger that I would watch the highlights of the game on The Big Match and push myself over the edge into a permanent depressive insanity. And I know that when we got to the church, the vicar expressed his pleasure in seeing such a large congregation given the competing temptations of a Cup Final on TV, and that friends and family nudged me and smirked.'*

*(Nick Hornby, 'Fever Pitch')*

## Chapter I

### *The Beginning of a Great Industry, 1937-53*

*'The televising of football is not easy, in view of the large area to be covered, the rapid movement of the ball and the poor light often experienced.'*

(P.H. Dortè, BBC Television Outside Broadcasts and Film Supervisor, 20 September 1946<sup>1</sup>)

*'(...) No doubt they, with the rest of us, savoured every minute of the England v. Argentina match at the Empire Stadium, where the size of the mid-week crowd suggested that a record number of grandmothers were being buried. Probably for the first time in television's history cheers went up from homes up and down the country as Milburn gave England the victory. Speaking for oneself, one was astonished to find that one had joined in and clapped hands excitedly, too.'*

(Reginald Pound, *The Listener*, 24 May 1951)

The first television service in England began in 1936. Those early days of television history in the UK were characterised mainly by two elements: firstly, TV was exclusively the BBC's; secondly, it was a London-only service, being available to about 2,000 receivers installed in homes within the 25-mile range of the transmitter at Alexandra Palace, headquarter of the BBC Television Service<sup>2</sup>. Those rare viewers, calculated in the region of about 23,000 in 1939, could watch variety, Shakespeare, some sporting events, and such events as the King returning

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<sup>1</sup> BBC Written Archives Centre (WAC), T14/93/1 – 20 September 1946, Dortè to Howarth.

<sup>2</sup> Range of television broadcasting was limited by the inadequacy of wireless transmission. In 1936 a TV cable was installed linking Alexandra Palace to Victoria Station passing through Park Lane, Piccadilly, Shaftesbury Avenue and Buckingham Palace.

from a visit to Canada<sup>3</sup>. Television was not an important factor in British society, yet. But from the very beginning of television broadcasting itself, sport and television started walking arm in arm, blending so well that their relationship became practically indissoluble; and 'sport became a key instrument in the promotion of television as a new form of entertainment', offering 'the most effective way of attracting an audience for what was a considerable unknown entity'<sup>4</sup>.

After the break in television transmission due to the war, the BBC, thanks to the Government's far-seeing interest in taking expert advice already in 1943 on how TV might extend its service after the war, was able to produce a better service, and the Alexandra Palace transmitter was improved so as to cover a range of about 40 miles and 12 million potential viewers. Obviously, at that time to get a television set was neither easy nor cheap, and so only some 15,000 households seized the chance of being able to watch the blurred pictures from that weird magic box called 'television'. However the war years had given the radio a very important role, and throughout the '40s the BBC was more confident in giving priority to its radio broadcasting rather than to television. Even in 1955 the BBC's expenditure on radio and television was in the ratio of 61 to 39, with £10.9 million spent on radio against £7 million on television. Nonetheless in the early '50s the

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<sup>3</sup> For these pieces of information and all the others related to the historic aspects of television in Britain, see: Seymour-Ure, Colin, *The British Press and Broadcasting since 1945*, Oxford: 1991, pp. 60-106; Tunstall, Jeremy, *The Media in Britain*, London: 1983. And, obviously, the massive history of the BBC by Asa Briggs, as well as Bernard Sendall's and Jeremy Potter's history of Independent Television: Briggs, Asa, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom – 5 Voll.*, Oxford: 1961-95; Sendall, Bernard, *Independent Television in Britain – Voll. I & II*, London: 1982-83; Potter, Jeremy, *Independent Television in Britain – Voll III & IV*, London: 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Boyle/Haynes, *Power Play...*, p. 39.



new medium started its rise both in terms of audience appreciation and of specific weight within the Corporation. Just to give an example, in 1954 the BBC's TV staff grew by one quarter<sup>5</sup>. Territorial coverage was enhanced, too, and in 1954, thanks to new transmitters, there were 36 million potential viewers; and, in terms of actual audience, 20% of all households were already in possession of a TV set. It was a result that, although quite poor if compared to the penetration of TV in the USA, was by far the highest in Europe<sup>6</sup>.

The situation described above is the frame of the first phase of the relationships between BBC Television and the football authorities, which is the focus of this chapter. During this stage, an interested alliance characterised the mutual connection between the Corporation and the FA: the BBC was interested in football because it would be a perfect item of programming in order to boost general interest in the new medium; the FA realised how good an instrument TV would be for the popularisation of the game. But, unfortunately for the BBC, the government of football was not just the FA's. Professional football in England was also controlled to some extent by another important body: the Football League.

The role of the FA since its foundation in 1863 was to codify the laws of the game, to organise the national FA Cup competition and the national team, and to be responsible of the administration of the game from grassroots to professional football. In short, the FA acted as the 'umbrella body' that authorised

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<sup>5</sup> From 1,320 to 1,700.

<sup>6</sup> In 1954, while in the USA there were 199 television sets per thousand population, the UK had 81. But Belgium, the closest in Europe, had only 5, and France 3. Tunstall, J., *The Media are American*, London: 1977, p. 293.

competitions throughout the country. Among those competitions there was, since 1888, the Football League competition for professional clubs<sup>7</sup>, with the League acting only under the supervision and control of the FA, which was the supreme authority. Although, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the League grew so much in size, prestige and power that ‘the FA and the Football League were often referred to interchangeably as the game’s “governing body”’, as highlighted by Taylor in his work on the history of the Football League<sup>8</sup>. That situation of confusion meant inevitable moments of contention between the two bodies, with the interests of League, contributing the most relevant clubs to the FA Cup, and the majority of players to the national team, extending well beyond its own competition: ‘by the Second World War, (...) , the League was hardly a subordinate body’<sup>9</sup>.

An important ground of diversity between the FA and the League is to be spotted in the differences of social and cultural background of their officials. If on the one hand the FA officials were all from the upper-class representing the English ‘London based’ ruling elite, on the other hand the ‘Leaguers’ were mainly professionals, managers and employers, the vast majority of them being from the North-West of England (from 1902 the League was based at Preston), and a notion of ‘northern-ness’ has always characterised the professional sector of football, as pinpointed by Tony Mason<sup>10</sup>. Those ‘historic divisions between the

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<sup>7</sup> Professionalism was legalised by the FA in 1885.

<sup>8</sup> Taylor, Matthew, *The Leaguers: The Making of Professional Football in England, 1900-1939*, Liverpool: 2005, p. 34.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>10</sup> See Mason, Tony, ‘Football’, p. 178-179, in Mason, T. (ed.), *Sport in Britain: A Social History*, Cambridge: 1989, pp. 146-186.



“amateur” traditions of the southern based FA, representing the national team and “local” football, and the “professional” approach of the northern based Football League, representing the professional football clubs’<sup>11</sup> caused a sort of ‘genetic’ tendency to incommunicability between the FA and the League as far as governing of football was concerned.

Similarly, in consideration of the fact that the BBC’s officials shared the same sort of social background and lifestyle with the FA’s, the League and the BBC experienced some difficulty of communication between them in relation to negotiations for the televising of football. In fact, unlike their colleagues in the FA, the higher ranks of the League, who in the post-war years were definitely in a position of control over the commercial and financial side of football, were quite opposed to the televising of the game, mainly because of their worries of collapsing gates. And, on the final stages of this first phase, the League seemed to draw the FA closer to its position, causing severe difficulty to the BBC. This difficulty would get even worse in the years to come due to the appearance in the arena of a fourth player: commercial television.

### **Forging a sense of ‘Britishness’**

When Bunny Austin and G.L. Rogers left the Wimbledon Centre Court lawn after having played their match on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June 1937 (Austin had won 3 sets to 1), they probably did not realise that they had been protagonists in a crucial

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<sup>11</sup> Williams, John/Neatrou, Sam, *The ‘New’ Football Economics – Fact Sheet n°10*, Leicester: Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football research, 2002, p. 2.



moment in the history of television: the first live sporting television broadcast ever<sup>12</sup>.

That very first transmission was the BBC's, of course, and the person who provided this broadcast was the first BBC Director of Television, Gerald Cock, previously Head of Outside Broadcasts (OB)<sup>13</sup> in radio. After the success of this experiment from Wimbledon, he looked to produce other live television coverage of sporting events. Thus, in the following months, the few lucky owners of a set in those pre-war years had the opportunity to watch the Imperial Trophy Road Race from Crystal Palace on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1937 (a motor racing event), and, in the following year, the Rugby Union international between England and Scotland from Twickenham (March), the Boat Race (2<sup>nd</sup> April) and the first 'live' Test Match cricket (24<sup>th</sup> June). In 1939, among the other sporting events, the Derby was televised, too. If we consider that in April 1938 the England-Scotland football international and the FA Cup Final had been broadcast too, it can be said that in those pre-war years television contributed to the development of the national sporting calendar which had been sketched by radio commentaries since the late

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<sup>12</sup> The first sporting television broadcast in the USA, a college baseball game, was produced by a New York experimental television station only two years later. The televising of the 1936 Olympics from Berlin by German Television, which consisted in 72 hours of live transmission over the airwaves to special viewing booths in Berlin and Potsdam, cannot be considered a public television broadcast due to both the fact that it was experimental and that it was produced with too low a number of scanning lines per second (180 only) to be considered of sufficient definition. The BBC was the first television service to introduce, in 1936, the Marconi-EMI system of 405 scanning lines per second (roughly equivalent, in modern terminology, to a resolution of 480x368 pixels), being 300 scanning lines per second the minimum required for a transmission to be considered 'television'.

<sup>13</sup> As Burton Paulu clearly and simply explains, an outside broadcast is 'a programme originating outside a studio' (Paulu, Burton, *Television and Radio in the United Kingdom*, London: 1981, p. 319). One of the best definitions of 'outside broadcast' is the one given by Peter Dimmock: 'the essence of a true Outside Broadcast is to report real happenings, while they happen and from where they happen – whether in Westminster Abbey, at Old Trafford, or on the top of the Matterhorn', Dimmock, Peter, *Television Outside Broadcasts: a Lecture*, London: 1968, p. 3.

'20s, as highlighted by Scannell and Cardiff in their impressive study of the British Broadcasting Corporation during the inter-war years, where the authors pinpoint how the BBC's 'orderly and regular progression of festivities, rituals and celebrations (...) that marked the unfolding of the broadcast year' – including Wimbledon, the Grand National and the Cup Final – was the most notable way of communicating and constructing national culture by the Corporation<sup>14</sup>.

Those events, along with some Association Football and Rugby Union internationals, as well as major boxing matches, would shape the habits of the British television audience for sports in the years immediately after the war. If there was one aspect that characterised both the first experimental pre-war sports broadcasts as well as the ones after 1945 it was the link with the State and, particularly, the Crown. Both major state and sporting occasions were under the responsibility of the BBC's Outside Broadcasts department, which was directed by Seymour Joly de Lotbinière. Both the sporting events above mentioned and major state occasions, such as the 1937 and 1953 Coronations and the 1946 Victory Parade, were produced by the BBC OB department. This resulted in a consequent attempt by the BBC to build a tendency in the expanding audience to

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<sup>14</sup> Scannell, Paddy/Cardiff, David, *A Social History of British Broadcasting: Volume One 1922-1939, Serving the Nation*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991, p. 278. On the sport coverage of BBC Radio in the inter-war years see also: Huggins, Mike, 'BBC Radio and Sport, 1922-39', in *Contemporary British History*, March 2007. For the history of the early years of football broadcasts on BBC Radio see: Haynes, Richard, "'There's many a slip 'twixt the eye and the lip". An Exploratory History of Football Broadcasts and Running Commentaries on BBC Radio, 1927-1939', in *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 34/2 (1999), pp. 143-156. On the matter of early football broadcasts see: Isola, Gianni, 'La radiocronaca all'italiana: Nicolò Carosio', in *Ludus, Sports e Loisirs*, n° 1 (1993), pp. 40-49. On the first years of Sound Broadcasting and on the relationships between League clubs and the BBC see also: Taylor, *The Leaguers...*, pp. 267-272. On the importance of BBC Sound Broadcasting in the 1930s and the 1940s see also: Nicholas, Sian, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939-45*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996.



identify those occasions as 'National' occasions conveying 'a sense of a national way of life', as highlighted by John Hargreaves<sup>15</sup>. The Corporation was trying to forge a sense of 'Britishness' in which the televising of the Cup Final, the Boat Race, Wimbledon as well as the Coronation, had to become, as Whannel describes neatly, 'shared national rituals'<sup>16</sup>. And there were often occasions in where sport and the Monarchy had a natural connection because of the physical presence of royalty, such as, for instance, at the Commonwealth Games or at the FA Cup Finals. 'The collective experience of these events', as recently pinpointed by Jeff Hill, 'gave substance to the idea that they were 'national' occasions when the crowds shown on the screen (...) became a microcosm of the nation as a whole'<sup>17</sup>. This, the Corporation hoped, was bound to strengthen this kind of national identification and sense of belonging, pushing Whannel to the conclusion that 'the BBC, in short, had become a primary definer of national identity, a forger of national unity'<sup>18</sup>.

### **The baptism of football on TV**

Within the national calendar of events of wide interest for the British population that the Corporation was trying to build through both radio and television broadcasting (even though must be highlighted that, as Whannel points out, 'the annual sporting calendar is not simply a construction of the BBC but is modified by its relation to outside organizations, such as sports governing bodies,

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<sup>15</sup> Hargreaves, John, *Sport, Power and Culture: A Social and Historical Analysis of Popular Sports in Britain*, Cambridge: 1986, p. 154.

<sup>16</sup> Whannel, *Fields in Vision...*, p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Hill, *Sport, Leisure and Culture...*, p. 109.

<sup>18</sup> Whannel, *Fields in Vision...*, p. 20.



and by its needs to satisfy the public'<sup>19</sup>), football played an important role, giving thousands of football fans 'the opportunity to participate in the creation of a corporate national life', as pinpointed by Richard Haynes<sup>20</sup>.

As far as Association football was concerned, the BBC had already managed to break the boundaries of the pitch to move directly into the houses of all the potential viewers who had been comfortably sitting on their sofas since January 1927, when the first running commentary on a football match was provided from Highbury Stadium, Teddy Wakelam commentating on Arsenal hosting Sheffield United. Since then, despite the fact that fears that broadcasting would keep people away from grounds caused troubles in the relationship between the Corporation and football authorities (the League especially), football began to be a regular feature in radio programming, becoming familiar to million of listeners and, to some extent, something it was almost impossible to do without. As Haynes puts it,

'By the 1930s broadcasting was changing the patterns of social experience, specifically in the home. Similarly, running commentaries from football were changing the nature of football fandom to create the "armchair supporter". Far from creating a mass of "passive" supporters, radio brought a football community together, stitching together the public and the private spheres.'<sup>21</sup>.

The first telecasting of a football match in Britain took place on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1938, an England vs. Scotland clash for the British Home Championship played at Wembley Stadium (a single goal by Scotland's Thomas Walker after only six minutes of play, despite giving victory to the Scots, did not prevent England from winning the championship). Actually, a football match between Arsenal and

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 18-19.

<sup>20</sup> Haynes, 'There's many a slip...', p. 147.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

Everton, played on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1936, had already been shown on TV in 1936, but this was not a live outside broadcast; it was a case of showing film of a match. Meanwhile on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1937 the BBC had used two Arsenal teams in order to conduct some private experiments in outside broadcast television<sup>22</sup>. Due to lack of documentation it is not possible to find out whether the England-Scotland game on TV was an audience success, but it was closely followed by the first FA Cup Final to be televised, between Huddersfield Town and Preston North End, on 30<sup>th</sup> April.

First negotiations with the Football Association started late in 1937. Gerald Cock, the BBC's Director of Television, after a first letter sent on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1937 where he asked for permission to televise the England v. Scotland game and the Cup Final, met Stanley Rous, Secretary of the FA, on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1938 'in order to brief him on the question of televising the matches'<sup>23</sup>. Rous, who had already been struggling with the FA Council on the matter, experiencing 'a rough time'<sup>24</sup>, pinpointed how the FA had already received offers from a news reel company. The money deriving from the sale of the rights would have been divided between the teams and the grounds, the FA not having any. Films were of course considered to be much less 'dangerous' to small matches played in the London area on the same days for the single reason that they would be shown later. Cock pointed out that he represented a public service not relying on sales for

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<sup>22</sup> Incidentally, Arsenal FC also featured in the in the movie *The Arsenal Stadium Mystery*, showing how interested they were in exploiting all the possible means offered by new media to spread the popularity of the club.

<sup>23</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1323 - 14 January 1938, 'International Association Football Match and F.A. Cup Final'.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

income, but that the Corporation would probably agree to a 'facilities' payment, in line with the arrangements for the Grand National<sup>25</sup>. At the end of the meeting the feeling was that Rous was favourable to television, and that he would do as much as was in his power to convince the Council to allow the televising. As Rous would write many years later in his autobiography, 'Council members were at first greatly opposed to the idea (...) My own feeling was that if football was to remain a sport of the people we should accept all the current means of keeping the sport in the public eye'<sup>26</sup>. However, from the very beginning of the negotiations between TV and football authorities, the sensation was that it was 'going to be a struggle'<sup>27</sup>.

In February the situation looked like things would not get any further, with Cock pressing Rous and underlining how 'time is passing'<sup>28</sup>. In a letter to Rous, the BBC official tried to highlight how this televising would not affect attendances at other matches, given the exiguity of the number of sets installed so far, and that the BBC would prohibit any attempted reproduction in places of public entertainment. The closing lines of that letter could be considered as the manifesto of the new bond between football and television. Cock underlined how the BBC were 'absolutely confident that no ill effect could be caused on the attendances at other matches taking place on those days', and, most of all, that 'if

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<sup>25</sup> 'The BBC had always considered any payment to the FA as a 'facility fee for access to football premises and/or compensation for any lost revenue through loss of seats caused by camera positions, sound technicians or commentators', Haynes, R., 'A Pageant of Sound and Vision: Football's Relationship with Television, 1936-60', in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (April 1998), p. 216. On the issue of facility fees see: Whannel, *Fields in Vision...*, pp. 21-24.

<sup>26</sup> Rous, Sir Stanley, *Football Worlds. A Lifetime in Sport*, London: 1978, p. 88.

<sup>27</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1323 - 14 January 1938, 'International Association Football Match and F.A. Cup Final'.

<sup>28</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1323 - 22 February 1938, Cock to Rous.



permission were obtained, it would not be regarded as a precedent, but as a trial'. Then he concluded his letter highlighting how if the BBC were enabled to telecast the two matches in question it would be 'the beginning of a great new industry, the progress of which depends to a great extent on the co-operation of institutions such as the Football Association'<sup>29</sup>.

It is not sure that the words of Cock were convincing enough to achieve the hoped for aim, but exactly one month later Stanley Rous wrote to Cock that the FA Committee had agreed that

'as television is at present in an experimental stage permission be given to the British Broadcasting Corporation to televise the International Match and the Final Tie at Wembley on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> April respectively. This permission is granted subject to your making arrangements which will be convenient to the Wembley Stadium Authorities with regard to the position of Cameras and for the installation of the necessary equipment at the ground.'<sup>30</sup>.

This permission, according to what Cock himself declared in thanking personally Rous even before receiving the official letter from the FA, 'will be as much appreciated by the public – and not viewers only – as by ourselves'<sup>31</sup>.

Eventually the two matches were televised entirely, and 'except for a slight early break-down the televising of the final was a complete success'<sup>32</sup>, giving viewers the amusing spectacle of one of the two commentators, Thomas Woodrooffe (the other being Leslie Mitchell) eating his hat for having lost a bet. Gordon Ross recalled that peculiar baptism for football commentating in his book on 25 years of television in Britain:

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1323 - 22 March 1938, 'England v. Scotland & The Final Tie'.

<sup>31</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1323 - 21 March 1938, Cock to Rous.

<sup>32</sup> *The Times*, 2 May 1938 (16f).

‘Woodrooffe, commentating on the F.A. Cup Final between Preston North End and Huddersfield Town had remarked “If Preston score now, I’ll eat my hat” – score they did; and how I remember the dramatic moment when watching my first cup final, as Mutch, the Preston inside forward moved up to take a penalty kick. He aimed for the roof of the net – the ball struck the under-side of the bar and bounced over the line for a goal – only seconds remained. The cup went to Preston, and a commentator suffered certain discomforts later in the evening!’<sup>33</sup>.

Hat-eaters apart, satisfaction at the BBC headquarters was general, as stated in an internal circular to the Director of Television: ‘apart from the line trouble at the beginning, the whole show seemed (...) to be outstandingly good from the technical point of view’<sup>34</sup>. On that occasion a powerful aerial was placed between the Twin Towers of Wembley Stadium, ‘providing the stadium with a new icon of modernity’<sup>35</sup>.

In the same internal circular above mentioned, though, there were still some doubts regarding the appeal of such lengthy broadcasts to ordinary viewers and the broadcast of the final, that lasted from 2.30 pm to 5.15 pm, was even considered ‘a strain on one’s eyesight’<sup>36</sup>. But if one thing was certain it was that, as highlighted by Haynes, ‘the possibility of (re)producing ‘live’ visual transmissions from football stadia clearly introduced a new popular cultural spectacle’<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Ross, Gordon, *Television Jubilee*, London: 1961, p. 58.

<sup>34</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1323 - 4 May 1938, ‘Cup Final: 30<sup>th</sup> April; Televised Outside Broadcast’. But, according to Cock’s own post-mortem, ‘the preliminaries were a disaster’, with the radio commentary carried by television broadcasting failing for the first half-hour. Quoted in Barnett, *Games and Sets...*, p. 8.

<sup>35</sup> Haynes, R., *Sport for the Slothful? A Study of Televised Football in Britain*, unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Strathclyde: 1997, p. 58.

<sup>36</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1323 - 4 May 1938, ‘Cup Final: 30<sup>th</sup> April; Televised Outside Broadcast’.

<sup>37</sup> Haynes, ‘A Pageant of Sound...’, p. 212.

Later in 1938, the second halves of other two matches were televised from Highbury Stadium: the FA Charity Shield between Arsenal and Preston North End on 26<sup>th</sup> September, and England vs Rest of Europe one month later.

In 1939, supported by the positive experience of the previous year, the BBC started a new campaign for the Cup Final, in order to confirm it as a key date in the national calendar of televised events of wide interest to the British population. It initially seemed that there were no problems at all and that the FA would be willing to give permission again. A problem arose, however, just a few weeks before the match regarding the possibility of theatrical rediffusion by private firms. A fear of piracy dawned at one meeting between the FA and some cinema proprietors in March: 'one of those present mentioned that he might rediffuse, even if they had not been given permission'<sup>38</sup>. This of course was unacceptable for the FA, and even if the BBC would have no direct responsibility, Rous assured that, in the case of such piracy during the televising of the game, 'the transmission would be cut off immediately'<sup>39</sup>. Rous, on behalf of the FA, the Football League, and the Wembley Stadium authorities, informed Mr Modrey of the Gaumont-British Picture Corporation that 'the Council is unable to give permission for the television of the Cup Final to be rediffused'<sup>40</sup> because the

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<sup>38</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1323 - 27 April 1939, 'Cup Final – Television'.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. In order to find out whether forbidden rediffusion would take place at some cinemas, Rous had promised the proprietors that he would send representatives of his at various cinemas with instructions to telephone him immediately if they saw any reception of the transmission. Actually a public rediffusion had been permitted. It regarded trade demonstrations on the stands of radio dealers at the Ideal Home Exhibitions. See BBC WAC, T14/1323 - 27 April 1939.

<sup>40</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1323 - 25 April 1939, 'The Final Tie – Gaumont British Picture Corporation Ltd'.



conditions of the agreement with the BBC were very clear about this issue. The agreement said

‘a) that reception be limited to the owners of domestic sets, i.e. to home viewers. b) that the B.B.C. will take appropriate action against any person or persons who rediffuse or attempt to rediffuse the television of the match without the authority of the B.B.C.’<sup>41</sup>.

At the end of the day, everything worked out smoothly for both the BBC and the FA, and no rediffusion took place by cinema proprietors.

As far as the OB production of the 1939 Cup Final was concerned, particular attention was given to the technical arrangements, in order not to incur the same slight technical drawbacks as the previous year. It was an all-out effort for the OB department: 3 mobile vans<sup>42</sup>; 4 cameras<sup>43</sup>; and 22 people, either engineers or programme staff, who were involved in the operation.

Things went smoothly, but there was some difficulty in managing the production, especially as far as cameras were concerned, as highlighted by BBC’s

Ian Orr-Ewing in Wheen’s book on the history of television in Britain:

‘When covering games that needed more space, such as football, cameramen often had to change the lenses on their Emitrons and set up the focus again, which took several minutes. “In the last Cup Final before the war, in the last minute of extra-time, a penalty was given and we hadn’t got a camera available”, Orr-Ewing recalls, “so we just talked and went off the air for a moment. We rushed the telephoto lens into the only serviceable camera and focused it on the goal-mouth and the spot-kicker. We got it perfectly”.’<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> One van contained the scanner, with devices allowing the director to edit pictures from cameras; another one had the generator, powering the whole operation; the third van had the transmitter, connected to an aerial.

<sup>43</sup> Two, one Super Emitron 4” lens, used for the majority of the game, and one Super Emitron 12” lens, used for crowd shots and occasionally for throw-ins and goals, were placed in the Press Box on each side of the central gangway; the third camera, an Ordinary Emitron 12” lens, used occasionally on the game and to take the King as he returned after shaking hands with the teams, was placed on the steps of the Stewards’ Box; a fourth camera, Ordinary Emitron 12” lens, was placed on the roof of the scanning van and was used only for the presentation of the Cup.

<sup>44</sup> Wheen, Francis, *Television*, London: 1985, p. 238.

Regarding the commentator, there were no hats eaten this time; but George Allison, Arsenal manager and BBC football commentator since as early as 1932<sup>45</sup>, despite being partially excused because his position on the steps of the Stewards' Box was not good, was considered 'unsatisfactory' by Orr-Ewing, appearing to be too slow, and 'he certainly did not know the players. He was constantly groping for words and names'<sup>46</sup>. The BBC would have to struggle somewhat before finding the 'perfect commentator' for television.

On 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939, during a Mickey Mouse cartoon, BBC television stopped its service. There was no warning or announcement. A war was beginning, and Britons were about to enter very rough days.

### **The FA to govern, the League to rule**

On 7<sup>th</sup> June 1946 the service was reopened with the very same Mickey Mouse cartoon that had been interrupted seven years earlier. After the war, the number of television licences rose, and 'the new medium posed new problems and created new opportunities'<sup>47</sup>, as Briggs says. One of these opportunities was, for sure, the televising of sporting events as both a relevant item of programming and a way to raise the morale of British viewers with the showing of leisure activities. Furthermore, seeing the matter from the BBC's point of view, it would represent a great boost for the re-launch of the Corporation's television service.

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<sup>45</sup> See Carter, Neil, *The Football Manager. A History*, London: 2006, pp. 59-60.

<sup>46</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1323 - 1 May 1939, 'Programme report – Cup Final'.

<sup>47</sup> Briggs, Asa, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom – Vol. IV: Sound & Vision*, Oxford: 1979, p. 839.

P.H. Dortè, BBC Television Outside Broadcasts and Film Supervisor, made immediately clear to Rous that the televising of sports, and of football in particular, was a necessary feature in plans for the BBC TV Service:

‘With the reopening of the Television Service, we are endeavouring to re-establish all sports of major importance which, before the war, were the subject of a television outside broadcast. We are at present planning our winter schedule and we should like to include some Football association matches amongst our programmes.’<sup>48</sup>

Therefore, the FA, in the person of the Secretary Stanley Rous, were immediately asked to discuss the future of this hoped for relationship, in order to come to an agreement of ‘mutual satisfaction’<sup>49</sup>. The future, however, would not be as easy as the BBC hoped. This because a new actor was about to enter the arena of negotiations for football on TV: the Football League.

When Ian Orr-Ewing, TV OB Manager, met Stanley Rous at Paddington on September 1946 in order to arrange an agreement for the televising of FA matches, Rous, ‘extremely co-operative’ as usual, immediately explained that ‘although the F.A. were the governing body, the League were very powerful’. He made clear that there would not be any chance to get any further televising of football apart from the Cup Final and some Internationals without the co-operation and the prior approval of the League<sup>50</sup>. Unfortunately for the BBC, this co-operation would be, in the years to come, more than a chimera for the television people.

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<sup>48</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/1 - 15 August 1946, ‘Televising of Association Football. 1946-7 Season’.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/1 – 16 September 1946, ‘Meeting at Paddington with Mr. S.F. Rous of the Football Association on the subject of Television of F.A. Matches’.



Following Rous's advice, Dortè immediately approached Freddy Howarth, Secretary of the League, with a letter. In that letter, after having highlighted how the BBC were 'naturally anxious' to include Association Football within their programming, and after having reassured how unlikely the possibility of public rediffusion at cinemas would be, he pinpointed how, in the opinion of the BBC, 'broadcasting, both sound and vision, widens the public interested and, as a result, such broadcasts are of much mutual advantage', using more or less the same language that had characterised Rous's approach to the matter of television before the war. It was also underlined that given that there were only 15,000 television sets in operation in the zone of Alexandra Palace, the only area of the country where a TV OB of football could be produced for technical reasons, 'the number of viewers cannot possibly materially affect the gate'<sup>51</sup>. Thus Howarth was requested to submit the matter to the Management Committee. If they felt that 'it was undesirable to televise the whole of a match, consideration could be given to televising part only'<sup>52</sup>.

The answer by the League came only two months later and clearly displayed the attitude of the League from the beginning of the negotiations. The reply to Dortè's request was that the Management Committee would approach the question of televising League matches only next May or June<sup>53</sup>. This reply

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<sup>51</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/1 - 20 September 1946, Dortè to Howarth.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> This was not the first time the BBC and the League had had rough times in their relationship. As early as in 1930 there had already been an argument regarding the running commentary of the 1930 FA Cup Final, which was not allowed by the FA because of the refusal by the BBC to pay the facility fee requested. Behind this request by the FA Gerald Cock, Head of OB, spotted the pressure of the League, and he 'firmly placed the blame for the breakdown in negotiations with the influential Football League', which 'represented the "purely commercial" element of the FA Council'. In Haynes, 'There's many a slip...', p. 147.

obviously shattered the BBC's hopes of having League football for the 1946-47 season. Orr-Ewing suggested then to Howarth that if the Committee 'felt their way clear to an agreement in principle, television programmes might be considered in the nature of experiments'. The suggestion was to arrange some experimental broadcasts of League matches, so that 'any decision then reached might be more valuable, as it would be based on practical results rather than hypothetical circumstances'<sup>54</sup>. Furthermore, Howarth was reminded of the fact that other sporting governing bodies, such as the Jockey Club, the Lawn Tennis Association, the Rugby Football Union, and the Speedway Control Board, had given agreement to the BBC in principle, leaving the Corporation with the possibility of negotiating on an ad hoc basis with the clubs concerned. It was a very well structured reply to the first negative answer by the League, but it was not good enough to un-stick them from their guns.

But why was the League so un-cooperative with the BBC? Why did it maintain such a negative attitude towards that new potential instrument of popularisation of the game? Why was it so opposed to televised Saturday football? The main fear was not only a loss in gates in the other League games played contemporarily to the TV broadcasting, but also that the television of a First team's away match would prejudice attendance at the Second team's home match. This was a point that Howarth made clear in a letter that he wrote to the clubs: 'the matter of television of League matches is one which will sooner or later affect every League club and not only the two clubs concerned in the

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<sup>54</sup> BBC WAC T14/93/1 - 19 November 1946, Orr-Ewing to Howarth.

broadcast'<sup>55</sup>. But, above all, those fears were just a consequence of an inertial approach to the whole matter of commercialisation of football displayed since the late Twenties and throughout the Thirties. As Matthew Taylor has so clearly displayed, rather than exploiting the rising popular success of football, also thanks to radio broadcasting, 'inertia if not obstinate conservatism has become the orthodox interpretation of the League's response to commercialisation of the game'; and growing attendances and consequent general increase in gates, considered just as a direct consequence of rising working-class prosperity, worked against any attempt of commercial exploitation based upon any form of broadcasting: 'the League did not expand the commercial side of its operations simply because there was no pressure to do so'<sup>56</sup>.

However, luckily for the BBC, the FA proved much more collaborative than the League, and in 1947 there were the television broadcasts of some odd games: an FA Cup Tie in February between Charlton Athletic and Blackburn Rovers; the England vs Scotland international; the Cup Final between Burnley and Charlton played at Wembley Stadium in April; and another international between England and France from Highbury Stadium early in May.

Regarding the Fifth Round Cup Tie between Charlton and Blackburn Rovers, played on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1947, the telecasting of this match had been put in jeopardy by League's negative attitude, even if this was a game under the FA's jurisdiction. Even though the BBC had already been given permission by the FA to televise the game, both clubs insisted on the BBC applying to the League for

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<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Briggs, *Sound & Vision...* , p. 875.

<sup>56</sup> Taylor, *The Leaguers...* , p. 246.



permission. The BBC then approached the League, which replied on 29<sup>th</sup> January that, in view of their letter of November 15, they could not give official approval to televising the Charlton Cup Tie on February 8. Following that letter, the BBC asked Rous, 'who has always been friendly', for advice. Rous suggested that the League's reply was to be interpreted as meaning that the League did not raise any objection; therefore he had already advised Charlton and Blackburn to let the BBC televise. It is interesting to note that obtaining the Cup Tie on February 8<sup>th</sup> forced the BBC to cancel the broadcasting of the Rugby match scheduled for this date, a necessary renunciation that was 'quite worth doing',<sup>57</sup>.

The final report on the production of the broadcasting of the Cup tie played in February (which incidentally cost the BBC the overall sum of £71.5s: Facility fee: 25 guineas<sup>58</sup>; Commentator: 10 guineas; Sound lines: £25; Contingency: £6.10s.<sup>59</sup>) is particularly instructive. There were 3 cameras, placed, quite unusually, on the terrace at the southwest corner of the ground: 'the camera positions were not ideal but were the best which Charlton could offer and, in the circumstances, justified the programme'. In spite of the unfavourable weather conditions 'the camera men did a good job', but their panning was 'at times completely inexcusable'. Commentator was former referee Jimmy Jewell, and even though it was judged that he had 'a lot to learn', tending to ignore the monitor and to talk about events that were not on the screen, it was felt that 'he will improve in time' and that the OB department should 'persevere with him',<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/1 - 3 February 1947, 'Fifth Round Cup Tie'.

<sup>58</sup> 1 Guinea = 1 pound & 1 shilling.

<sup>59</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/1 – February 1947, 'Billings Cup Tie'.

<sup>60</sup> See: BBC WAC, T14/93/1 – February 1947, 'Camera Report for Cup Tie'.

Curiously, Jewell had been the referee of the very first televised FA Cup Final in 1938; he would join the BBC as football commentator right after the end of the War, and was the BBC's first choice until his death from a heart attack in 1951.

The effort by the OB department for the production of the England-Scotland clash was massive: 4 mobile vans; 3 cameras<sup>61</sup>; 2 commentators; a total of 22 people involved in the engineering and programme staff. The programme ran from 2.30 to 5 pm. Main commentator Jimmy Jewell (whose fee was 10 guineas) 'seemed very good', even though 'he was inclined to talk when we wanted nothing but effects'; it was also reported that 'he talked through the second "God Save the King"'. Managing of sound effects proved quite difficult, given that 'it is an established fact that the loudest cheers ever heard in England are the winning goal in a Cup Final', and the final whistle 'was not heard by anybody'<sup>62</sup>.

The Cup Final between Burnley and Charlton should have been televised only for the second half, in view of the domestic fuel cut<sup>63</sup>. But just a couple of day before the match 'special permission' was given to televise the whole of the game<sup>64</sup>. In the 'Programme Report' of the Cup Final broadcast it was written that the position of the 3 cameras used in the production suffered of panning and lighting troubles ('we should not place our cameras at the end of the ground in

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<sup>61</sup> One Super Emitron 3" lens, which provided a long-shot for the following of the game, placed in the main stand; one Super Emitron 6" lens, used to follow the majority of the play, placed in the main stand; one Ordinary Emitron 12" lens, placed on the third step of the Steward's platform.

<sup>62</sup> See: BBC WAC, T14/93/1 – 20 March 1947; BBC WAC, T14/93/1 – 28 March 1947, 'Television Programme of England v. Scotland 12<sup>th</sup> April and FA Cup Final'; and BBC WAC, T14/93/2 – April 1947, 'Programme Report on International Football Match'.

<sup>63</sup> After World War II, the British economy had lost huge amounts of absolute wealth, and took some time to be reorganised for peaceful production. Furthermore, the winter of 1946-1947 proved to be very harsh curtailing production and leading to shortages of coal which again affected the economy, leading to drastic fuel cuts.

<sup>64</sup> See *The Times*, 24 April 1947 (4f).

order to minimise panning and in order to get the light behind us')<sup>65</sup>. Sound effects were considered satisfactory, especially thanks to the feature of a hand microphone for the interview with the winning captain; few effects were obtained from the football itself, though, a point that 'should be covered next year possibly by microphones high up facing towards the field and screened from crowd noises'. As far as commentators were concerned, they proved handicapped by their position, with too many spectators so close to them (there was as yet no commentary box at Wembley Stadium). Of the two commentators, Jimmy Jewell (whose fee was 15 guineas) 'gave far the most rigorous and intelligent commentary', while newcomer Norman Creek (whose fee was 12 guineas) 'was slow and some 15 seconds behind the game and kept describing the obvious', typical mistakes of a radio commentator trying to move to television. The overall cost of production was £106<sup>66</sup>.

Finally, the production of the England-France international, broadcast from Highbury, required: 3 cameras<sup>67</sup>; two lip microphones for the commentators as well as effect microphones to pick up crowd noise; a vision monitor, a visor, and two pairs of headphones for the two commentators, Jimmy Jewell (whose fee was

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<sup>65</sup> One Super Emitron, placed in the corner below the Royal Box, used a 6" lens for 85% of the game and a 12" lens for the first 15 minutes in order to provide close up views of the Duke of Gloucester shaking hands with the teams; another Super Emitron, mounted on a newsreel camera platform, gave a poor picture, due to being into sun, and was used for 5% of the game; one Standard Emitron 12" lens, placed on the rostrum, was used for an interview with the winning captain, but the interview was conducted so close to the camera that focusing was awful.

<sup>66</sup> See: BBC WAC, T14/93/1 – 26 April 1947, 'Billings F.A. Cup Final'; BBC WAC, T14/93/2 – 2 May 1947, 'Programme Report Cup Final 1947'.

<sup>67</sup> One Super Emitron 4"-6" lenses, and one Standard Emitron 6"-12" lenses, both placed below the clock in the south stand; one Super Emitron 8"-12" lenses, placed in the south west corner of the ground.



7 guineas) and his new fellow Alan Clarke. The programme ran from 2.20 to 5.10 pm<sup>68</sup>.

As far as facility fees were concerned, for the televising of the Scotland v England international and for the 1947 Cup Final, the FA had suggested that the BBC should pay fees of £200 each game. The counter offer of the Corporation was of 50 guineas, but the opinion was that 'we shall soon be forced to pay fees considerably higher than the facilities fees paid for sound broadcasts'<sup>69</sup>. They did not know yet how right they were. At the end of a brief negotiation the eventual facility fee paid by the BBC for the Cup Final was 50 guineas. It was not possible to discover the fee for the England-Scotland game, however it is likely to have been in the same region.

### **Televising of football forbidden. Signed: League**

Dortè, after having personally met Howarth at Charlton on the occasion of the Cup Tie above mentioned, wrote a letter to the Secretary of the League in which he made clear some points that he felt he had failed to explain during the meeting. First of all, as provincial stations, when erected, would all take the same programme as London, only one complete match could be televised on one afternoon, and thus attendance could be affected at one ground only. Secondly, winter programming of outside broadcasts of sporting events had to be shared between a range of different sports, such as soccer (both professional and amateur), steeple chasing, rugby, motor racing, etc, all of them having their turn,

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<sup>68</sup> See: BBC WAC, T14/93/1 – 14 April 1947; and BBC WAC, T14/93/2 – 1 May 1947, 'Programme Requirements: England v. France'.

<sup>69</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/1 - 3 February 1947, 'Fifth Round Cup Tie'.

and as a consequence the number of transmissions devoted to one particular sport had to be very limited. Finally, he reminded Howarth that the BBC's view had always been that televising of sport was

‘a good thing for sport and not a bad thing, as listeners and viewers who have not been in the habit of attending sporting events are attracted to them as a result of having seen and heard them on the air.’<sup>70</sup>.

When the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the League finally considered the matter of televising of League football in June 1947, as promised early that season, it issued a press statement saying that television was a matter to be decided between individual clubs and the Corporation. Therefore a plan to televise half the game between Charlton and Chelsea to be played on October 25<sup>th</sup> was immediately arranged by the BBC, with both clubs giving their agreement. But on 7<sup>th</sup> October the League notified all clubs that the Management Committee had decided to refuse its consent for any televising that season, and Howarth sent a letter to Orr-Ewing informing the BBC that, after having consulted the clubs as to their attitude to televising of League matches, ‘the result of the questionnaire sent to the Clubs shows a substantial majority who are opposed to the principle of television’, and that ‘accordingly the Management Committee have decided to refuse consent for any Football League match in the League Competition this season to be televised’<sup>71</sup>. Despite this decision, the BBC proceeded with its arrangements for the Charlton v Chelsea game, given that the ruling had been received after an agreement had already been reached with the two clubs in

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<sup>70</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/1 - 10 February 1947, Dortè to Howarth.

<sup>71</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/3 - 7 October 1947, Howarth to Orr-Ewing.

question. At this point Howarth sent a short but significant telegram: 'Televising of Charlton match October forbidden. Signed: League'<sup>72</sup>.

This was definitely a big blow for the BBC, which was still strongly convinced that 'this decision does not mean, however, that British television will be further handicapped in the struggles for progress which will make it the shop window for television world markets'. In particular they highlighted the attitude of the FA, which 'in direct contrast to the Football League, has taken a most progressive view in helping this new science'<sup>73</sup>. The result of it all was that the BBC, as in 1947, could supply its viewers with pictures of some internationals and FA Cup matches only, as well as the principal amateur games.

The difficult liaison with the League turned up once again in December 1947. Following the draw for the FA Cup round to be played on January 10<sup>th</sup> 1948, Orr-Ewing approached Charlton quoting the FA's permission in order to get facilities for the televising of their game versus Newcastle United. Two days later Mr Seed of Charlton telephoned the BBC to say that it was felt by his club that their visiting team would be very unlikely to give their permission as they were in principle opposed to television. Therefore Orr-Ewing decided to approach Arsenal to get permission to televise their Cup tie against Bradford. Arsenal suggested that it would be better for the Corporation to clear the matter with Bradford. This time the visiting team gave their permission for televising the first half of the game, the BBC then informing Arsenal of the agreement. But, again, at this point it was Arsenal that, on 24<sup>th</sup> December, intimated that they were wondering whether the

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<sup>72</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/3 - 14 October 1947, 'Football League Stop Television'.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.



League could take action against Arsenal for agreeing to the television broadcast of part of the Cup Tie. Eventually, on 30<sup>th</sup> December, the BBC received a letter from Arsenal stating that ‘their Directors now felt that it would not be possible for the television broadcast to take place’<sup>74</sup>, probably as a result of the pressure from the League. So, not only was the League impeding any TV broadcast of League matches, but it was even trying to prevent the televising of FA Cup ties, which were not under their direct control but the FA’s, putting pressure on the few clubs favourable to television.

The tension was growing stronger and stronger, and even Rous started being quite disappointed at Howarth (considered now by the BBC as the ‘enemy’) and at the League’s generally negative attitude, especially their interference with matters directly under FA control, such as the FA Cup. Rous, after the cancellation of the television broadcasting of the Arsenal-Bradford Cup tie, which he considered as ‘thoroughly unconstitutional’, went so far as to say that if the BBC applied for permission to televise the Cup Tie on Saturday week in the ordinary way, the BBC would be at liberty to refer the two clubs to Rous who would then personally inform them that ‘in this matter the F.A. rather than the League is the governing body’. The future for professional football in Television was ‘anything but black’, hopefully<sup>75</sup>.

In order to have a better understanding of the reasons behind the negative attitude of the League, it is instructive to read the opinion of ‘one of the

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<sup>74</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/3 – January 1948, ‘Case History of Negotiations Re Television of Professional Football’.

<sup>75</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/5 – 13 January 1948, ‘Football in Television’.

best-known secretaries in the game' interviewed by *The Sporting Life* in January 1948:

'We do not want television. We put up with running commentaries, but we draw the line at television. We may be called old-fashioned, we may be told that we ought to go with the times, and we may be told that we are hindering progress, but talk of that kind is moonshine to me. Why should my club maintain a huge, expensive organisation to provide cheap entertainment for those who do not contribute anything to the up-keep of that organisation? Let me tell you what experience has taught me with regard to broadcasting running commentaries. When there is a big match at Wembley, and it is broadcast, it means the loss of many hundreds of pounds to my club if we are playing at home. Thousands who would otherwise go through our turnstiles remain at home to listen to the running commentary. I am not talking through my hat.'

What this 'mysterious' Secretary wanted to pinpoint was that gate receipts of his club collapsed on days when an International or a big Cup game were broadcast:

'Those who say this broadcasting does not injure clubs financially don't know what they are talking about. They say that because they wish to believe it but it does not square with the facts. If I had the power I would abolish all broadcasting of football matches, not because I am opposed to broadcasting, but because clubs have a right to protect themselves against something that does them considerable financial harm. If my club shows a loss on the year, it would not be of much use for it to appeal to the B.B.C. or its millions of listeners to help it out of its trouble.'

Finally, talking about television, he highlighted how it would do 'even more harm to clubs than running commentaries', taking for granted the supposition that, since Association football was the most popular athletic sport in the country, the weekly televising of big games would be a strong inducement to people to buy sets. Therefore, his final advice to clubs was

'to refuse to have anything to do with television, and even to cut out running commentaries if they can, as I know both are a serious menace to the future prosperity of big clubs.'<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> *The Sporting Life – Weekly Edition*, 24 January 1948. In BBC WAC, R30/915/4.



It was such a clear idea on the future development of television revealing, though, such a close-minded opinion on the possibility of a relationship of mutual advantage. Had this Secretary understood the economic potential of televised football in terms of money coming from the selling of rights, it would have been very easy to overcome this prejudicial point of view. But there were some factors that have to be considered in partial justification of his argumentation. First of all the vast majority of the League clubs, rather than considering radio and television as instruments of popularisation of the game throughout the country, were adamant in their conviction that the situation was the other way round, with football used instrumentally by the BBC for the popularisation of radio and TV. Although, the matter of selling rights was not yet in anyone's mind, at least in terms of covering more than the loss in gates, given that the only fees paid by the BBC were the facility fees, covering the costs of arranging facilities at the grounds. Furthermore, the fact that there was only one television network operating in those years prevented any kind of competition, giving the BBC the power to negotiate without the risk of being overbid by any other broadcaster.

As far as the position of the FA was concerned, the *Sporting Life's* correspondent was quite straight in explaining the reasons for such a co-operative position: 'the F.A. never suffers financially from broadcasts and television – only the clubs'. Therefore, given that 'there will be a lot of ironing out to do before the various interests involved come to an agreement', he suggested a round-table conference as the best solution in order to settle all differences<sup>77</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.



Thus, following a suggestion by Rous, a dinner was arranged to allow free discussion between the BBC members, the FA ('who are friendly to the idea of televising football') and members of the Football League ('who are hostile'). At the dinner, chaired by Norman Collins of the BBC, there were present Rous, Mr Brookhirst (Secretary and Chairman of the FA respectively), Mr Oakley and Mr Drewry (Vice President and member of the Management Committee of the Football League respectively), as well as three representatives of regional sections of the FA: Mr Eden (Secretary of Hampshire County), Col. Crisp (President of Middlesex County), and Sir Leslie Bowker (Member of the London FA Council). After long discussion, the result was successful, quite surprisingly, at least according to Collins' report, with the two members of the League saying 'they would not themselves raise further opposition', confirming, though, that 'Mr. Howarth, the Secretary of the League, was known still to be hostile'<sup>78</sup>. Therefore they proposed that Howarth should be invited by the BBC for a further meeting when he would be in London early in February in company with the eight other members of the League. So, the success obtained by Collins of the BBC has to be intended in consideration of the fact that for the first time in any negotiation with the League there were at least two of its members on the BBC's side.

One further demonstration of how the League was obstructing televising of football even when it regarded a competition not directly controlled by them, concerns the negotiations that the BBC had started with some clubs in order to televise at least one of the three FA Cup matches due to be played in the London

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<sup>78</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/93/5 - 26 January 1948, 'Television of Football'.

area early in February 1948. The three games in question were Tottenham vs Leicester, Queens Park Rangers vs Luton Town and Fulham vs Everton. The first game was quite immediately ruled out, given that Tottenham were not very keen and that Leicester were 'adamant in their refusal to allow any part of the match to be televised'. As far as the second game was concerned, when Peter Dimmock, Assistant Television O.B. Manager (and future Director of this department) approached Mr Hurley, Secretary of Queens Park Rangers, he was told that 'they would very much like to allow us to televise, but were afraid of the League'; at the same time another BBC man, Keith Rogers, was trying to get a positive feedback from Luton Town, only to be eventually told that 'they would only agree if the F.L. (*Football League*) gave their blessing'<sup>79</sup>. So far, so bad. It seemed that clubs were scared to death by the League<sup>80</sup>, and that nothing could be decided without the agreement of the League Management Committee, even when it was not effectively required, as in the case of FA Cup ties.

The most instructive example of how difficult were the negotiations in those days, though, is the one related to the third game in question, Everton visiting Fulham. After a preliminary telephone approach by the BBC to the two clubs at the end of January, Howarth informed Fulham that their action 'would put the League on the spot'; immediately after, Rous advised the club 'to ignore this

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<sup>79</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/4 - 2 February 1948, 'Negotiations RE F.A. Cup Tie'.

<sup>80</sup> Sanctions to clubs that not respectful of League rules and decisions of the Management Committee could range from a fine (the amount of the fine to be decided according to the nature of the infringement) to suspensions. In case of serious breaches to the rules or of challenging the authority of the Committee, as in the case of Leeds City in 1919, the extreme sanction consisted in the expulsion from the League.



veiled threat'. 'All appeared to be going smoothly'<sup>81</sup>. However, on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> February the *Daily Mail* reported a disagreement on Everton's part<sup>82</sup>. Dimmock, quite 'astounded', in the afternoon of the very same day paid a visit to Fulham in order to collect their letter of agreement and the 16 television passes, which were regularly handed to him. But on Sunday evening he was given the official news that Everton had definitely retracted their verbal permission to the TV outside broadcasts dept. He then immediately spoke to Rous and explained the situation to him. The next day proved the decisive one. On Monday morning an aggressive Dimmock telephoned Everton, charging Kelly, the Manager, of making mischief by retracting his first verbal agreement, pointing out how the Football League Management Committee had unanimously agreed at the FA meeting in October 1947 that selected FA Cup ties could be televised. Furthermore, he highlighted to Kelly that the Corporation had already incurred considerable expenses as a result of the initial permission of the club, and that such a short-notice change of plans would cause the BBC to lose a lot of money (the tie was due on 7<sup>th</sup> February). As a reply, Kelly, after having blamed the press for having mounted a case that could put the League and the FA in a harsh controversy, promised Dimmock he would call him back after a meeting with the club's Board. At 12.50 pm Kelly phoned Dimmock to say that 'it had now been decided to stand by their original decision to allow the match to be televised'<sup>83</sup>. To be sure of this, Dimmock asked for a telegram confirming the conversation. The telegram arrived at 2.10 pm, after

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<sup>81</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/4 - 2 February 1948, 'Negotiations RE F.A. Cup Tie'.

<sup>82</sup> See *Daily Mail*, 1 February 1948.

<sup>83</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/4 - 2 February 1948, 'Negotiations RE F.A. Cup Tie'.



which Dimmock was able to call Rous to say that everything had been settled. The game was eventually televised<sup>84</sup>.

No problem at all arose for the TV broadcasting of the 1948 FA Cup Final, at least from the football authorities' side (which does not necessarily mean that there was no problem at all). But this time the difficulty arose from within the BBC itself. After permission had been easily granted by the FA for the televising of the Final at a fee of 100 guineas ('we have rather more facilities than we had last year', wrote Orr-Ewing<sup>85</sup>), the BBC had initially planned to have a fourth camera 'just as we had before the war' in order to interview some of the crowd before the kick off<sup>86</sup>. But on 4<sup>th</sup> April Orr-Ewing was already afraid that the plan would not be followed in full and that something was going to be turned down as far as the technical side of the production was concerned:

'it is too distressing that we have to fight for every inch of progress with the Senior Engineers. (...). I am afraid it is all further evidence of the desire to make sure that there is no breakdown rather than the desire to progress with ambitious arrangements, and it is exactly this spirit that is killing the enthusiasm of my department.'<sup>87</sup>

He was right. On 14<sup>th</sup> April Orr-Ewing confirmed that, to the considerable surprise of Rous himself, as a result of the opposition of the engineering section to the use of a fourth camera, the BBC will 'not be able to undertake the ambitious

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<sup>84</sup> The televising cost a total of £135 to the BBC (£52.10 as facility fee to Fulham, 15 guineas to commentator Jimmy Jewell, plus other expenses for technical production). BBC WAC, T14/93/4 – 3 February 1948, 'Billing'.

<sup>85</sup> The facility fee for the 1947 Cup Final had been 50 guineas.

<sup>86</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/4 – 5 April 1948, 'Cup Final'.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. The internal feud between OB department and Engineers at the BBC would last quite a while. For instance, in 1952 de Lotbinière, quite dissatisfied with the technical facilities provided by engineering staff for OBs, complained about 'expensive television equipment lying idle'; and when Superintendent Engineer T.H. Bridgewater dwelt on 'the recent great increase in television hours devoted to sport', de Lotbinière replied with retaliation that 'it is hardly surprising when we enjoy marathons like Wimbledon, Test Matches and the Horse Show.'; quoted in Briggs, *Sound & Vision...*, pp. 870-871.

programme planned and no doubt a suitable announcement will be made from the studios explaining the reason'<sup>88</sup>. The disappointment was tangible, especially in consideration of the fact that rather than progressing from pre-war productions it seemed that the televising of football was going backwards:

'I felt fully justified in assuming that the Directorate would insist that pre-war facilities should not be lessened. I feel bound to put on record my bitter disappointment that we are unable to capture the very colourful scenes which take place in a Cup Final crowd and give them to 200,000 viewers, purely because of a restrictive practice by the engineering division. It is hardly surprising that television has made virtually no progress since 1937 (...)'<sup>89</sup>.

Apart from giving us the flavour of his disappointment, in this letter Orr-Ewing supplies a fundamental piece of information regarding figures of audience in these post-war years.

The game was televised on 24<sup>th</sup> April at a total production cost of £216<sup>90</sup>. With due credit to the two finalists, who displayed wonderful football in the 4-2 victory of Manchester United over Blackpool, McGivern could tell Dimmock that the broadcast had been 'quite first class, most exciting and real television'<sup>91</sup>. There were 3 cameras in use<sup>92</sup>; commentators were Jimmy Jewell (15 guineas fee)

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<sup>88</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/4 – 14 April 1948, 'Fourth Camera for Cup Final'.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/4 – 24 April 1948, 'Billing FA Cup Final'. A first estimate had been £178 (see: BBC WAC, T14/93/4 – 25 February 1948, 'Estimate Cost FA Cup Final').

<sup>91</sup> Quoted in Briggs, *Sound & Vision...*, p. 860.

<sup>92</sup> One Super Emitron 3"-6"-12" lenses, in a position in the corner by the Royal Box, used mainly for shots on the stands and for close ups of the King (a curious as much as disappointing accident occurred to this camera: a film cameraman pushed this camera off the King during the playing of the national Anthem after the match); two Super Emitrons in the main position 'below the restaurant', one with an 8" lens, for following the game; these two cameras, though, gave rather too narrow an angle for following the play, so after 20 minutes of play it was decided to switch this task to the one in the Royal Box. The use of close-up lenses was still too experimental to be a feature to which both cameramen and viewers were accustomed to, and there were many complaints about the fact that more than once goals were missed by cameras trying to catch up with the ball following corner or free kicks.



and England national team manager Walter Winterbottom (10 guineas fee)<sup>93</sup>. They ‘appeared good’, with Winterbottom, despite being ‘inclined to talk a little too much’, displaying ‘a good command of his subject’<sup>94</sup>.

As the AGM of the Football League, due to be held in London on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1948, was approaching, the BBC started again to wonder whether there would be any change of attitude by the Management Committee about the forthcoming season. Change seemed very unlikely, though, at least according to the rumours that preceded the meeting: ‘we have been told that Howarth is going to try and ban television from any league grounds during the coming season in addition to banning any league teams from taking part in a television broadcast’<sup>95</sup>. This decision, besides representing a serious escalation of hostilities, would affect the FA Cup competition too, consequentially ruling out the televising of any professional football game save the Cup Final. It was something that the BBC could not bear.

Ian Orr-Ewing wrote a letter to Rous on the eve of the meeting, manifesting the fears of the Corporation and asking almost desperately for help:

‘If you get a chance to speak to the enlightened members of the Football League, we would be most grateful if you could encourage them not to enter into an overall ban but to give television a trial. (...) We are not asking for “carte blanche” to televise matches throughout the season, we are merely asking for permission to negotiate with individual clubs, and if at any time during the season they have any doubts about the effect of television, then they are perfectly at liberty to refuse further applications.’<sup>96</sup>.

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<sup>93</sup> Walter Winterbottom was in charge between September 1946 until the end of 1962, when he was replaced by Alf Ramsey.

<sup>94</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/4 – 27 April 1948, ‘Programme Report – Cup Final’.

<sup>95</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/5 - 7 June 1948, Orr-Ewing to Rous.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.



Of course the 'doubts' referred to were related to any possible effect in terms of loss of gates; but the BBC's objection about this issue was that 'no one knows for certain what the effect on the gates will be and surely there must be a trial period after which a decision could be made', adding that 'those F.A. matches which we have televised have not had their gate in any way effected [*sic*] – rather the reverse in fact'<sup>97</sup>.

Terms of the discussion about the matter of television during the meeting are unknown, but the result is known: 'it was unanimously decided to ban televising of all matches in which league clubs take part with the exception of the F.A. Cup final and international matches.'<sup>98</sup> Perhaps Rous had not managed to get in contact with any member of the League before the congress, but at least he had a long discussion with Howarth immediately after. Rous, who was always positive and optimistic, reported to Orr-Ewing that, even if nothing would possibly change the situation for the season to come, he felt 'certain we shall be able to prepare a statement to give the Clubs a lead before their next Annual General Meeting'<sup>99</sup>. It was certainly not a great consolation, but at least there was still a silver lining.

The schedule of TV broadcasts of football for the season 1948-49, without any League competition and any FA Cup match, was then drawn up as follows:

- League Champions-Cup Winner from Highbury, 6<sup>th</sup> October 1948;
- England-Switzerland at Highbury, 1<sup>st</sup> December 1948;
- Amateur International Trial at Ilford, 18<sup>th</sup> December 1948;
- England-Scotland at Wembley Stadium, 9<sup>th</sup> April 1949
- Amateur Cup Final at Ilford, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1949<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> *The Times*, 9 June 1948 (2b).

<sup>99</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/5 - 10 June 1948, Rous to Orr-Ewing.

<sup>100</sup> The Amateur Cup Final, after a decision of the FA early in 1949, was staged at Wembley Stadium.

- Any Amateur International taking place in the London area;
- Plus the Semi-Finals and the Final of the FA Cup, televising of which was asked to the FA, given that they were organised entirely under FA auspices<sup>101</sup>.

Not a huge plan, limited not only by the League's decision but as well by the fact that live pictures could be fed only for matches played in the London area. It is quite interesting to note how the BBC fixed the attention also on amateur football, which was experiencing a revival of popularity in the country in the late Forties<sup>102</sup>. However, either professional or amateur, one thing was clear: the BBC wanted live football on television.

The Corporation had not definitely given up on the matter of the televising of League games for the following season, though. Firstly because they had not received any official communication from the League after the meeting; secondly because they thought, and hoped, that the decision of the League was in regard only to the TV broadcasting of the whole of a game, while there could be some chance of live television, if permission was asked, for the televising of part only; thirdly, and probably more importantly, because the OB dept. could count on a higher budget (the number of licences was growing and growing<sup>103</sup>) and was now ready to pay something in order to get what they wanted. Therefore Orr-Ewing decided to have a further go at Howarth, to whom he wrote that the Corporation 'would like facilities at some six league matches during the coming season', that

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<sup>101</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/93/5 - 25 June 1948, 'Television Broadcasts: Season 1948/9', Orr-Ewing to Rous.

<sup>102</sup> Attendances at FA Amateur Cup Finals played at Wembley in those years were extraordinary: 93,000 in 1949; 88,000 in 1950; and 100,000 (setting a record for an amateur football match) in 1951. For this, as well as for other pieces of information on amateur football in post-war years see: Porter, Dylwin, 'Amateur Football in England, 1948-63: The Pegasus Phenomenon', in *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 14 (2), Summer 2000, pp. 1-30.

<sup>103</sup> If in 1947 there had been 14,560 TV licences only (at £2.00), in 1948 their number was 45,564 (200% increase).



they were 'anxious to safeguard the League's interest in this matter', and that in order to do so they 'would be prepared to take only a portion of each match and to discuss an appropriate facilities fee with your committee at their convenience'<sup>104</sup>. However, any hope was swept away by the reply of Howarth, who firmly and concisely wrote to Orr-Ewing:

'the matter of televising football matches was discussed at the Annual Meeting of the Clubs (...) and the Clubs resolved not to permit any football match in which they participate to be televised with the exception of International matches and the Football Association Challenge Cup Final Tie. In view of this decision of the Clubs (...) facilities to televise any League match this season cannot be granted.'<sup>105</sup>.

### **One or two scrappy football games...**

Despite the troubled relationship between the BBC and the football authorities, in those post-war years not only did sport keep the role that it had gained in the first few years of television, but, especially thanks to the TV broadcasting of special sporting events such as the 1948 Olympic Games held in London, it seemed clear that sports broadcasting would become one of the most important pieces of television programming as a whole. If in more general terms the 1948 Olympics had the powerful effect of showing how international sport, in the immediate post-war period, could be based on different values from those of international politics, in terms of television broadcasting they were the very first major sporting event with quite comprehensive coverage to draw international attention.

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<sup>104</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/93/5 - 25 June 1948, 'Television Broadcasts: Season 1948/9', Orr-Ewing to Howarth.

<sup>105</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/5 - 26 June 1948, Howarth to Orr-Ewing.



On that occasion the BBC prepared well in advance (organisation began in autumn 1946), established a broadcasting centre in the Palace of Arts (lent for the occasion by the Managing Director of Wembley Stadium, Sir Arthur Elvin) with eight radio studios and thirty-two channels, allocated fifteen commentary boxes and sixteen open positions at Wembley Stadium as well as sixteen commentary points at the Empire Pool, and mobilised staff and equipment from the Regions to London for about one month (from 15<sup>th</sup> July to 14<sup>th</sup> August). The daily programme which brought the Games to viewers was *Olympic Sports-reel*, and in the event the outside broadcasting output doubled the original plan of programming. The combined radio and TV coverage of the London Olympics was declared by the BBC to be ‘the biggest broadcasting operation (...) yet (...) carried out in the country’<sup>106</sup>.

Notwithstanding the extraordinary success of the telecasting of the 1948 Olympics in terms of organisation, technical production, and audience appreciation (‘the coverage of the 1948 Olympic Games (...) captured public interest in television (...) to a hitherto unprecedented extent’<sup>107</sup>), official negotiations for League football stopped for more than one year. After the League met on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1949 for its AGM, the press reported: ‘As last season, the League will ban television with the exception of internationals and F.A. Cup final’<sup>108</sup>. In the meanwhile in winter 1949 there had been broadcasts of ‘one or two scrappy football games’<sup>109</sup>, due to the decision to telecast some Amateur games, such as

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<sup>106</sup> Quotation from Paulu, *Television and Radio...*, p. 322.

<sup>107</sup> Briggs, *Sound & Vision...*, p. 272.

<sup>108</sup> *The Times*, 31 May 1949 (6a).

<sup>109</sup> *The Listener*, 3 March 1949 (375).

Hendon-Barnet or Dulwich Hamlet-Walthamstow Avenue, on Saturday afternoons. And there were, among the other planned televised matches, the FA Cup Final and the England v. Scotland clash late in April, the broadcast of which impressed viewers for both its commentary and camera work, as testified by Harold Hobson of *The Listener*:

‘(...) The England and Scotland football international, I both saw and heard. Peter Lloyd once again impressed by his commentary. He has a quick eye for vivid details outside the exact run of the play. His stressing the gaiety of Cowan’s green cap added a good deal to the afternoon’s enjoyment, and a casual phrase about the interplay of Cockburn and Finney – ‘they seem to like each other’ - made the game suddenly seem human. Jimmy Jewel, too, was an admirable commentator, and the visual part of the entertainment was as good as the usual. The camera did full justice to the extraordinarily fine goal-keeping of the Scottish Cowan, and I cannot altogether agree with the Reader who in the Radio Times chides it for concentrating, when a corner kick is taken, on what happens at the flag instead of waiting for the ball to arrive in the goal-mouth. (...)’<sup>110</sup>.

On 20<sup>th</sup> June 1949 Peter Dimmock mailed the usual formal application for television facilities for the forthcoming season to Rous. This application included:

England-Italy at Tottenham, Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November  
England-Scotland (amateur), Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> March  
England-France (amateur), Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> April  
Amateur Cup Final at Wembley Stadium, Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> April  
FA Cup Final at Wembley Stadium, Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> April  
(Plus the possibility of television facilities at any international or representative matches which may be subsequently arranged in the London area)<sup>111</sup>.

The problem was not as far as FA football was concerned; it was the impossibility of having television coverage of Saturday League football that caused frustration at the OB headquarters. Therefore, late in 1949 the BBC was ready for a new attempt to break the prohibition on televised football, as can be read in the letter that de Lotbinière wrote to Rous, the one and only ‘insider’ the

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<sup>110</sup> *The Listener*, 28 April 1949 (730).

<sup>111</sup> See: BBC WAC, R30/916/2 – 20 June 1949, ‘Association Football 1949/50’.



Corporation could count on among all the football officials ('I fancy that your support over these last fifteen years has been of immeasurable help to Sound and Television O.B.s'<sup>112</sup>). The new plan, actually, was not so different from the old one of televising just a part of one League match per week; but trying to convince the League to accept this as an experiment without demonstrating that gates would not suffer because of television, or proposing any further instrument of persuasion (read: 'money'), was impossible.

For the 1949/50 season the BBC was forced to stick to the original application sent to Rous, which had at least been accepted by the FA Council. The production of the England-Italy international played at Tottenham on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1949 was of particular interest, especially with regard to camera position, given that all the three cameras used were placed on a tubular platform situated on the portion of the terraces just behind the corner flag<sup>113</sup>. This meant that it was possible to go along with what was considered the ideal positioning of cameras according to some OB producers, who usually would rather have their cameras 'behind one of the goal lines in order to avoid having to pan the cameras too violently left and right, which (...) makes it difficult for the cameramen to follow the game'<sup>114</sup>. That experiment was abandoned, though, in favour of the half-way line position, for several reasons: firstly because in the near future it would become the convention internationally acknowledged and utilised;

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<sup>112</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/7 – 20 December 1949, de Lotbinière to Rous.

<sup>113</sup> See: BBC WAC, T14/93/7 – December 1949, 'Camera Report International Soccer Match'.

<sup>114</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/4 – 21 May 1948, Rogers to Jewell.



secondly because cameras positioned at the half-way line on one side of the ground obeyed the realist film convention of the 180-degree rule<sup>115</sup>.

As far as the commentary panel on the England-Italy game was concerned, both Jimmy Jewell and new fellow commentator Peter Lloyd 'gave a reasonably good commentary' and showed 'steady improvement with regard to H.O.B.'s (*de Lotbinière*) suggestions for cross-references and not going longer than 5 minutes without reminding us of the score'<sup>116</sup>. The new pairing of commentators was in charge of the FA Cup Final in April 1950, too. On that occasion, if Jewell gave 'a very good commentary' and 'definitely shown improvement during the latter half of this season', deserving of being considered 'well worth persevering with', Lloyd proved to be 'a long way behind Jimmy'. As a consequence of this sort of trial for the new commentator, suggestion was given that 'at the beginning of next season we should carry out a series of tests under operational conditions'<sup>117</sup>.

The three cameras in charge of covering the play were all placed in the 'usual Wembley positions', meaning in the main stand by the Royal Box<sup>118</sup>. Regarding the quality of pictures, even though Hobson of *The Listener* wrote that 'shadowy figures moved about in a half-light, suddenly, and for no apparent

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<sup>115</sup> The matter of camera position would remain under scrutiny for many years to come, and still in the Sixties there were those among the viewers, like Mr. G.J. Love from Hampshire, who thought that the international convention of the cameras positioned on the half-way line 'gives anything but a steady picture', affirming that 'often one player only is seen in a view covering about two per cent of the pitch, and his position can be fixed only when the half-way line or corner of the penalty box comes in the picture', asking BBC producers if there was anyone able to convince them 'that easily the best view of a match is with cameras behind the goal line, both looking down the same touch-line', given that 'cameras in this position need move only occasionally through a quarter of the angle needed to cover both corners from the centre of the stand position, and the pattern of the game as the forwards advance is much more clearly seen'; *Radio Times*, 5 April 1962, quoted in Haynes, *Sport for the Slothful...*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>116</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/7 – December 1949, 'Camera Report International Soccer Match'.

<sup>117</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/8 – May 1950, 'Programme Report F.A. Cup Final'.

<sup>118</sup> This year all the three cameras were endowed with more than the usual two lenses, with lenses ranging from 2" to 20".

reasons, becoming for a moment brightly illuminated, and then slipping back into the darkness'<sup>119</sup>, the camera work, according to the OB producer who reported on the programme, was accomplished quite satisfactorily, and, despite bad weather conditions, it 'was first-class throughout the match'<sup>120</sup>. This first-class work was carried out by the cameramen in spite of 'irritating' conditions not of meteorological nature: 'hemmed in, crouching, kicking the wires and boxes lying about the tiny space available, with people moving past close by, or standing up, with wind blowing on them'<sup>121</sup>, as reported by Television Programmes Controller Cecil McGivern, who was present at Wembley on that occasion, to OB Head. The reply to McGivern by de Lotbinière was quite clear and instructive:

'Many thanks for your memo of 1<sup>st</sup> May. I am sure you are right about your point 1 and we will certainly work away towards the improvement of facilities for cameramen and commentators. If ever we were to reach the point where large screen showing of sporting events led to big money coming back to the promoter, then it should be easy to get first-class facilities for ourselves. This is not easy at present when we are still guests who are not altogether welcome. (...)'<sup>122</sup>.

One of the most interesting points in relation to the televising of this Cup Final, which cost £262.10 to the BBC<sup>123</sup>, was the production of a programme, 'Cup Final Preview', broadcast on the morning of the day of the Final itself. In the aftermath, the opinion of OB producers on this programme was quite controversial, considered that 'the weather alone put paid to any likelihood of this being a good programme'. The contribution of commentator Jimmy Jewell dealing with the past Cup and League exploits of the two finalists was considered

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<sup>119</sup> *The Listener*, 4 May 1950 (802).

<sup>120</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/8 – May 1950, 'Programme Report F.A. Cup Final'.

<sup>121</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/8 – 1 May 1950, 'Cup Final O.B.'.

<sup>122</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/9 – 4 May 1950, de Lotbinière to McGivern.

<sup>123</sup> See: BBC WAC, T14/93/8 – April 1950, 'FA Cup Cost'.



‘worth while and could, in fact, be repeated at matches not necessarily at Wembley’<sup>124</sup>.

As a last note on this 1950 Cup Final, a curiosity deserves to be highlighted: directly after the presentation, the Arsenal Captain was persuaded to hold the Cup in front of the camera for a few seconds, ‘an item worth having in future matches where there is any kind of presentation’<sup>125</sup>.

### **Stand up for your (copy)rights!**

A new issue turned up in spring 1950 with the involvement of the ‘Associations for the Protection of Copyright in Sport’ (APCS). Television was not just a problem for the football authorities; there was discussion of its implications in all the main sporting organisations in the country; and among promoters there were divided opinions on the matter. There were a few who were in favour of TV, and considered it a good means of free publicity likely to lure viewers to the grounds and therefore to increase gates. On the other hand, though, there were some ‘hawks’ who thought that television would keep people at home, sometimes raising objections that nowadays could sound pretty ridiculous, such as when the promoter of an ice show held at Wembley Pool in 1946 objected that additional lighting not only could melt the ice, but might compel him to offer such a service to his patrons in future meetings even when not necessary. But there was other opposition that actually represented a real danger for the future developments of the relationship between sports and television, being indicative

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<sup>124</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/8 – May 1950, ‘Programme Report F.A. Cup Final’.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.



of the fears some promoters had of losing support at the grounds or arenas or wherever sporting events were held. This was the case with boxing, for instance, which became the first sport to raise the issue of selling exclusive television rights of the event to prevent pirating.

Thus, as early as the end of 1944, the Racecourse Association called a meeting of representatives of many sporting bodies and the APCS was formed, its first aim being 'to obtain the protection of the rights of the promoter or producer of any Sporting, Spectacular or other Event capable of being televised or otherwise reproduced, whether of public interest or otherwise'<sup>126</sup>.

In late 1949 'the hawks began to dominate the argument'<sup>127</sup>, and a complete ban on the live television of sport was proposed. Still in February 1950 an APCS document stated that 'it is not the object to get more money for the promoters by selling the rights but to protect the whole sporting spectacle system'<sup>128</sup>.

When the APCS met on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1950 in London, to discuss the issue yet again, there were representatives of 94 sporting organisations, the most important being the FA, the Lawn Tennis Association, the Amateur Athletic Association, the Swimming Association, the Rugby Football Union, Epsom and Brighton Racecourses, and many others. The meeting was presided by F.S. Gentle of the Greyhound Racing Association. The aim of the APCS was, in the words of K.E. Shelley (counsel to the Performing Rights Society), 'to ensure that in five years'

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<sup>126</sup> The National Archives (TNA), HO 256/720 – June 1952, 'Sport in Television'. See also: TNA, HO 256/26. Regarding the relationship between the BBC and the APCS, see the detailed reconstruction made by Asa Briggs in: Briggs, *Sound & Vision...*, pp. 871-880.

<sup>127</sup> Barnett, *Games and Sets...*, p. 11.

<sup>128</sup> Quoted in Barnett, S., 'Sport', in Smith, Anthony (ed.), *Television. An International History*, Oxford: 1998, p. 87.

time the sports promoters will have a complete copyright of any event which they organise'<sup>129</sup>. During the meeting Shelley proposed that the BBC should be licensed for each event televised for home viewers, while a second kind of licence should be considered for hotels, public houses, clubs, institutes, halls and factories, with cinemas to be licensed in a third category. An estimate was made that in five years' time the annual returns from these licences would give a general income of about £154,000, with the BBC paying £10,000, the other fees being: hotels £25,000; large clubs £30,000; public houses £20,000; halls £15,000; cafés £2,500; institutes and factories £1,500; cinemas £50,000. As can be seen, the highest fees were for those places where public rediffusion could be carried out, and the bigger the place the higher the fee. As Sir Arthur Elvin, Chairman and Managing Director of Wembley Stadium, put it,

‘while the promoters, with suitable safeguards, do not necessarily object to the domestic televising of certain of their events, they do object to the televising of such events being exploited by outside interests for commercial purposes. This is being done on an ever-increasing scale, and unless some satisfactory undertaking is soon given to sporting promoters that their events will in due course be protected by copyright, it is more than likely that before long all promoters will be asked by the association to withhold all sporting broadcasts until a satisfactory assurance has been given.’<sup>130</sup>.

The greatest sum offered for the right to televise a sporting event had been about £250 (for the FA Cup Final), but the main problem was that television sets were operating in clubs and pubs and people could charge an admission fee to watch; had promoters copyright, they could prevent diffusion for private profit. As far as fees the BBC should pay for television broadcasting, Elvin added that the matter

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<sup>129</sup> *The Times*, 12 April 1950 (3a).

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*



‘had been under discussion by the promoters and the B.B.C. for several years, and still the promoters had got no satisfaction’<sup>131</sup>.

A final statement was issued in which a proposal was put forward to prohibit the televising of all sporting events until the laws of copyright could be reviewed by Parliament. The proposal would be put to a vote at a meeting to be called at the end of May. This represented a big danger for the BBC. According to the new situation, even the FA, in addition to the League and the sporting promoters’ companies such as Wembley Stadium that were already in principle opposed to the TV broadcasting of football, had to stick to the directives of the APCS.

The controversy, fuelled by Gentle’s declarations that ‘the question has now reached a head (...) and some solution must be worked out to the greatest good for the greatest number – or rather the least harm for the few’<sup>132</sup>, was then discussed at a meeting held at the General Post Office on 9<sup>th</sup> May, presided over by the Postmaster General, Mr Ness Edwards. At the meeting there were leading figures from sporting organisations as well as officials of the BBC. Edwards, after having highlighted that the problem of televised sporting events was one of ‘far-reaching importance’, extending to every field of social activity, expressed the wish to see an increase in the volume of sports television for the public in their homes. On their side, though, the representatives of the sporting organisations expressed their view that their legitimate civil interests had to be protected by copyright or another kind of legal safeguard. The BBC, on the other hand,

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> *The Times*, 1 May 1950 (3c).



repeated that the Corporation 'would at no time seek to televise any sporting event without the knowledge and consent and by the agreement of the promoters'<sup>133</sup>.

At the end of this important meeting, the Postmaster General, after having given assurances that 'those responsible for the promotion of sporting events should be given some reasonable safeguard of their legitimate interests'<sup>134</sup>, felt that delay in implementing the proposed ban on televising sporting events until the publication of the Beveridge Committee report on Broadcasting<sup>135</sup> should be considered, to provide time that 'might well be used for the televising of additional experimental sports items in order to gather experience of the real effect on all interests'<sup>136</sup>. The BBC had found a new ally in the person of the Postmaster General.

When the next meeting of the APCS was called at the end of May, a temporary settlement over the dispute of copyright was reached. Following the Postmaster General's proposal, it was decided to appoint an advisory committee in order to examine the effect of television on sporting events; besides, a calendar of 100 events to be broadcast per year, 20 of which would be major sporting events, was scheduled to be examined by the committee:

'The main function of that committee would be to collect from sources open to it such information as it considered necessary to enable it to assess the

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<sup>133</sup> *The Times*, 10 May 1950 (6f).

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> The 'Beveridge Committee' was the first committee on broadcasting in Britain after the war and was set up in 1949 in order to find out whether the monopoly of the BBC television service should be maintained. The report, issued in 1951, recommended the maintenance of the BBC monopoly. However, a minority report by the Conservative politician Selwyn Lloyd suggested that there should be a commercial alternative to the BBC. This report was to have more far-reaching consequences than the Beveridge Report itself for the future of TV in Britain. See: Blumler, Jay G. (ed.), *Television and the Public Interest*, London: 1992; Negrine, Ralph, *Television and the Press since 1945*, Manchester: 1998.

<sup>136</sup> *The Times*, 10 May 1950 (6f).

direct and indirect effects of televising sports events during an experimental period, which would start straight away.’<sup>137</sup>.

Whilst the argument between the APCS and the BBC was going on, separate negotiations were still taking place between the OB department and football authorities. So, following the recommendations of the Postmaster General, it initially seemed that when the League met for their AGM late in spring 1950, even if the approval for League games to be televised was denied yet again, no ban would be put on the TV broadcasting of Cup Final and internationals. But at this point something that is impossible to discover due to lack of documentation must have happened, and led the FA Council, meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1950 not to give permission for a live relay on TV of the England-Scotland international to be played in the spring at Wembley. The reason for this decision is not clear, but *The Times* gave a possible interpretation:

‘It is probable that the F.A. had the welfare of their clubs in mind when deciding against any televising of the England and Scotland match. This is to be played on April 14, a fortnight before the F.A. Cup final. Clubs at home on the first date would also be at home on the second and might suffer big financial loss.’<sup>138</sup>.

Furthermore, the Council decided not to allow live television of the entire 1951 Cup Final, granting permission for the second half only.

In 1951 the BBC tried until the very last moment to obtain permission for live TV broadcasting of the entire FA Cup Final. On 24<sup>th</sup> April 1951, only 4 days before the game, Alan Chivers, OB producer, wrote to Mr Miller of the FA that, ‘in the event of permission being granted for us to televise the whole or part of the

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<sup>137</sup> *The Times*, 24 May 1950 (6f).

<sup>138</sup> *The Times*, 21 September 1950 (7c).



Cup Final'<sup>139</sup>, the Corporation asked to keep the seats they had already booked for their staff at Wembley Stadium. The desperate attempt proved unsuccessful, and only the second half was relayed<sup>140</sup> Probably, but it is just a guess, the decision not to change the initial decision by the FA Council was fuelled by the misbehaving of the Corporation in televising the whole of the England-Yugoslavia game at Highbury in November 1950, while permission had been given for the second half only.

. In discussing the OB production of this Cup Final, it has to be underlined how, once again, conditions for the BBC staff did not get any better, as reported by Wolstenholme:

‘The commentary position at Wembley was simply dreadful, well behind the Royal Box. At the critical time of our transmission – ten minutes before the start when the teams were coming on to the field – crowds of people would be walking in front of us trying to find their seats.’<sup>141</sup>.

The same sort of impression was held by a very disappointed Cecil McGivern, who stated:

‘Again, as last year, and the year before (and as I said in previous memos), I was struck by the wretchedly uncomfortable conditions into which we put our cameramen and (especially) our commentators. Cramped conditions, no seats, surrounded by bodies and noise, they turn out work of a high standard which we just do not deserve.

On Saturday, Jimmy Jewell, sitting on a small box dug out at the last moment, attempted to write notes, holding down his paper on the top of the small monitor. When commentating, he had to twist into a ridiculous position to see both monitor and the field together.’<sup>142</sup>.

Curiously, in a period when the possibility of a competitor in the television service arena was dawning, the only way out of this uncomfortable situation was

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<sup>139</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/12 - 26 April 1951, Chivers to Miller.

<sup>140</sup> There is no certainty, though, whether it was relayed live or recorded.

<sup>141</sup> Wolstenholme, Kenneth, *50 sporting years and it's still not all over*, London: 1999, chapter 10.

<sup>142</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/10 – May 1951, ‘Cup Final O.B.’.



seen in competition itself: 'I am afraid that had we competition by another Service or Corporation, such unfair circumstances would disappear overnight'<sup>143</sup> (incidentally, plans for a commentary box at Wembley Stadium began to be sketched in July 1953<sup>144</sup>).

Before the end of the season an England-Argentina game was played and televised in May. The number of TV licences was growing and growing, and by 1951 there were 763,941, an almost 100% increase compared to the previous year<sup>145</sup>. Therefore, a televised international football game of the England XI would become something involving more and more viewers, uniting, little by little, the whole nation, as stated by Reginald Pound in the pages of *The Listener*:

'Probably for the first time in television's history cheers went up from homes up and down the country as Milburn gave England the victory. Speaking for oneself, one was astonished to find that one had joined in and clapped hands excitedly, too.'<sup>146</sup>.

### **The quest for the perfect commentator**

The England-Yugoslavia game played on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1950, apart from having probably been the unfortunate cause of the prohibition to televise the whole of the 1951 FA Cup Final, had some interesting features. Firstly, the 'white ball', as de Lotbinière wrote to Rous:

'The arrival of the white ball in the middle of the Yugoslavia match made all the difference in the world to viewers. (...). I should like you to know of the tremendous value the white ball can be to us.'<sup>147</sup>.

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> See: BBC WAC, T14/93/15 – July 1953; and BBC WAC, T14/93/16 – 29 January 1954. The FA was even inclined to sell the BBC the seats necessary to the building of the commentary box. See: BBC WAC, T14/93/15 – 10 September 1953.

<sup>145</sup> And there were about 1 million TV sets in the whole country.

<sup>146</sup> *The Listener*, 24 May 1951 (850-51).

<sup>147</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/10 – 4 December 1950, de Lotbinière to Rous.

OB producers had wanted a white ball for quite some time, as testified by an internal circular dated as early as October 1946:

‘Watching the football from the studio “B” Control Room on Saturday we were not able to follow the game as well as we might have done, because, except when play was close to the near-side touch line, we could not see the ball. Would it not be possible on future occasions to have the ball painted white? I am sure that if a suitable quality of oil or cellular paint were employed it would stand up to the length of a full match. It might, of course, be necessary for us to supply the ball ourselves, but it would certainly add one hundred percent to viewers’ enjoyment of the game.’<sup>148</sup>.

And again in March 1950 the idea was retaken in ‘cautious’ consideration, as can be read in an internal circular of the OB department.:

‘Regarding the white ball, we in Television are always very glad if clubs agree to use the white ball, as it does come out so much clearer on the screen. However, we have always been very careful not to press the white ball on clubs, in case they should have any objection to it, and have in every case left the decision either to the organisers or the captain of the two teams (...)’<sup>149</sup>.

It would take another 20 years, colour TV and the 1970 World Cup to have the white ball as a regular feature on football grounds throughout the world, but undoubtedly some recognition must go to the OB people at the BBC as it eventually replaced the good old brownie.

Another important feature of the England-Yugoslavia game was the very first presence as TV commentator of an England game of Kenneth Wolstenholme. Originally commentator on football for BBC Radio in the North West since 1947, he then moved to television as ‘understudy’ of Jimmy Jewell in 1948. His first official TV appearance as main commentator was in October 1950 for an amateur international trial between the Southern Counties and the Northern Counties

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<sup>148</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/1 – 21 October 1946, Cox to OB Manager.

<sup>149</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/8 – 28 March 1950.



played at Romford, at a fee of 8 guineas (plus expenses for 3 guineas)<sup>150</sup>. He had been auditioned just a few weeks before that match by commentating on an amateur game along with another 'three gentlemen'. This audition was one of those 'tests under operational conditions' that had been requested in the Programme Report of the FA Cup Final played earlier that year<sup>151</sup>. This is how Wolstenholme recalled that crucial moment of his career, and life: 'I did about then minutes of commentary in each half, as did the other three gentlemen, and I am ashamed to say I cannot remember who Romford were playing with'<sup>152</sup>. That game was Romford-Woodford Town, and his performance was not particularly appreciated by OB producer Alan Chivers, who wrote that 'Wolstenholme, who undoubtedly knows the game very well, still has a considerable amount to learn with regard to Television commentaries'<sup>153</sup>. But he was probably the cream of the crop, and therefore after the Southern Counties-Northern Counties game he was given a second chance. The England-Yugoslavia game became decisive for the future of television commentary in England. After the game Chivers himself commented on Wolstenholme that, despite the fact that in his opinion he 'talked a little too much at times', he showed 'good promise of becoming the sort of commentator we are looking for (...), he knows (...) more than either Peter Lloyd or Cliff Michelmores'<sup>154</sup>.

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<sup>150</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/9 – 14 October 1950. Wolstenholme himself affirmed that his very first television commentary was in January 1949 (see: Dimmock, Peter (ed.), *Sports in View*, London: 1964, p. 166), but there is no archival record of that commentary.

<sup>151</sup> The quest for football TV commentators kept going for the years to come, and from 1954 onwards closed circuit television private tests were held at Alexandra Palace.

<sup>152</sup> See: Wolstenholme, *50 sporting years...*

<sup>153</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/9 – 4 November 1950.

<sup>154</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/9 – 22 November 1950.



Fixed in the memory of millions and millions people in England for what is perhaps the most celebrated sentence in the history of British television ('They think it's all over... It is now'), Wolstenholme's qualities as a commentator were to be spotted, as Ian Wooldridge writes, in three main characteristics: 'a good knowledge of the game, a beautiful speaking voice and a respect for the English language'<sup>155</sup>. During his twenty and more years at the BBC, he covered more than 2,000 matches, provided the commentary to more than 20 FA Cup finals, and was the presenter of the Saturday football highlights programme *Match of the Day* in the Sixties. He also provided commentaries to 5 World Cups. In 1971 he was replaced by David Coleman as the main voice of football at the Corporation; as a consequence, in 1974 he signed for Tyne Tees Television (TTT), commenting on football for the regional programme *Shoot!* in the North-East until 1978<sup>156</sup>. His last job was for Channel4, when in the early '90s he commented on Italian football. He died in 2002.

The matter of television commentaries on football was a longstanding one, and the quest for the perfect TV commentator had begun even earlier than the arrival of television itself and kept going after the television service was re-launched after the War. In those years many commentators had their chance, but some of them were too rooted to their radio background, meaning being too slow in following the actual development of the game as it was being shown on the screen; some others tried to be more innovative and imaginative, proving

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<sup>155</sup> In Wolstenholme, Kenneth, *They think it's all over...*, London: 1996, p. 8.

<sup>156</sup> *Shoot!* was one of the football highlights programmes broadcast by Independent Television companies on a regional basis from the early Sixties onwards, either on Saturday night or on Sunday afternoon. *Shoot!* was Tyne Tees Television's, the company covering the North-East of England, and went on air as early as 1962.

though too carried away by their excitement. It was a question that was particularly dear to de Lotbinière<sup>157</sup>, who had strong views on how to comment on a football game. In particular he used to highlight the differences in style and economy of speech between radio and television, because, as underlined by Haynes

‘the necessity for a mellifluous quality within sound broadcasting – painting a picture with words – seemed unnecessary and almost intrusive with the medium of television (...). With radio there was room for error. If there occurred a “slip ‘twixt eye and lip” the radio commentator could use little “white lies” to get him out of a sticky situation. (...) television revealed – although selectively – the actual play and. Therefore, continually opened up the possibility that viewers could recognise mistakes in the narrative (...)’<sup>158</sup>.

Just to give a hint of how the OB Head was particularly keen on the matter of commentary on association football, in November 1950 he decided to write a letter to Chivers, OB producer, and to the four commentators in force at the OB department at that date: Michael Henderson, Jimmy Jewell, Kenneth Wolstenholme, and Cliff Michelmores. In this letter he outlined the general structure of how a soccer commentary should be carried out:

‘(...) during the next few months I would like to see Soccer commentators trying to base their commentary on an “A out to B who is robbed by C” basis. There is, in fact, a considerable difference between saying “A long pass out” and “A long pass out to X”. In the first instance the viewer feels that he is being told what he can see for himself. In the second instance he is reconciled to the descriptive piece by being given the name of the wing forward. With indeterminate play the commentator should not attempt to give all the names, but might be able to give a quick indication of some trend of the play (...). In addition to this skeleton of name-giving, the commentator must remember

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<sup>157</sup> Seymour J. de Lotbinière himself was a pioneer of OB commentary in the Thirties; and when in the mid-1930s he became new Director of OB, he managed to give sports commentary a definitive plan and method: ‘De Lotbinière’s upper middle-class background served to give him an invincible aura and he proved an intimidating figure to those entering the relatively unknown field of sports broadcasting. With an acute broadcasting mind he showed a fine understanding of what transported the listener in time and space to the array of sporting occasions the OBs were beginning to supply’, Haynes, ‘There’s many a slip...’, p. 150

<sup>158</sup> Haynes, *Sport for the Slothful...*, p. 81.



- 1) to explain infringements
- 2) whenever the game stops for a throw in or a goal kick, to say “Throw in to Romford” or whoever it may be, so as to let the latecomer know which team is which
- 3) to remind viewers of the score at least every 5 minutes
- 4) to remind viewers of the significance of the match
- 5) to make his comments briskly and succinctly (...)’<sup>159</sup>.

Wolstenholme himself will recall some years later how de Lotbinière (who, incidentally, had been a pioneer of OB commentary in the Thirties) used to explain that the first thing commentators had to remember was the size and composition of the audience:

‘He advised me to think of a pyramid. At the top was the smallest section of the audience – the experts, men who are actively engaged in the game either as players or officials. Further down the pyramid we meet the next group, which is somewhat larger than the first. It is composed of the soccer fans, those men and women who regularly crowd the terraces and retain a keen interest in the game. Then comes the third group, which is larger than either of the preceding two. This is the group of the sports fans, the people who are greatly interested in all sports, but whose particular interest is in a sport other than soccer. Finally, at the base of the pyramid, comes the largest group of all – the ordinary or, as we call him, the ‘marginal viewer’ who is just watching for sheer entertainment. He could well know whatsoever about soccer, but he is willing to watch in the hope that the game will thrill him and provide him with something he finds pleasant to watch. If the television broadcast is made interesting to this marginal viewer, it is possible that he might begin to climb the pyramid (...)’<sup>160</sup>.

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<sup>159</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/9 – 2 November 1950, ‘Football Commentaries’.

<sup>160</sup> In Dimmock, *Sports in Vision...*, p. 166. De Lotbinière continued pressing on commentators with his advice until he stayed as Head of the OB department, and given that he often used to compare football commentary to rugby’s, which he considered to be much easier than soccer, in December 1953 he issued a Decalogue on rugby commentary, too. The document was named ‘The commentator on football’ (where *football* is to be intended as *rugby football*, not *association*), and its content was: ‘The commentator must: a) identify one of the two sides by reference to the main visual characteristics. b) identify players throughout play – but only when the play makes it clear who he’s naming. c) identify one side after each stoppage, e.g. “Throw in to Newcastle”. This enables the late comer to get a quick idea of who’s who. d) give the score every five minutes at least (with time of play to date or left to go), and at psychological moments, e.g. as soon as a try is scored, give score – don’t wait till it is converted. e) explain any infringement or admit that he couldn’t see why the whistle blew. f) explain technique from time to time – but crisply and in relation to what is seen. g) work in some “significance” to the match or to the score, e.g. if the All Blacks have beaten Wales and England by more than 10 points, can a losing Scotland at least narrow this margin? – but again crisply and when opportunity offers. N.B. There’s very little time for any but the most memorable wisecracks.’, BBC WAC, T14/93/15 – 1 December 1953, ‘The Commentary on Football’.



The quest for the perfect TV commentator on football at the BBC continued even after Wolstenholme had been appointed as main TV voice; not until the 1966 World Cup did the BBC have a panel of universally acknowledged commentators. Until then, no commentator had managed to win universal praise from viewers, not even Wolstenholme, who received letters like the one from one viewer in Bolton who, after Hungary had beaten England by seven goals to one in 1954 in the return match of the famous England-Hungary game in 1953, wrote: 'Your name sounds German, and you praised Hungary from the kick-off (...). It is a wonder you did not shout "Heil Hitler" at the close'<sup>161</sup>.

### **Here comes the ban**

When the FA Council met at Newquay on 28 June 1951, the decision taken about the televising of next year Cup Final was that it 'should not be directly televised but that a film could be made for sub-sequent transmission'<sup>162</sup>. Even though the FA Council during the same meeting agreed to establish a special sub-committee to study the broadcasting of football matches and to invite the Corporation to be represented on it, the BBC was losing the support of one of their closest allies in the battle for live television of football.

What was the reason lying behind this decision to ban live TV broadcasting of the final? There is no direct proof, but it seems likely that there was an economic reason, with the FA, as well as the League, asking for higher facility fees to be paid by the Corporation. This conclusion is drawn in consideration of

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<sup>161</sup> Quoted in Briggs, *Sound & Vision...*, p. 868.

<sup>162</sup> *The Times*, 29 June 1951 (4b).

an internal memo by the Secretary of Administration of the BBC, marked 'confidential', in which an excerpt from the minutes of the Board of Management Meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1951 is reported. In that memo it was written that, even though 'the Corporation should not itself take the initiative in offering any compromise on the Cup Final ban', the Board welcomed the proposal to have the BBC represented in the FA's sub-committee for broadcasting of football<sup>163</sup>. Perhaps the FA, by allowing the BBC to be part of the sub-committee, was trying to buy the favours of the Corporation in order to get a higher fee. This is just a supposition, but it can be corroborated by the contents of a note written by de Lotbinière on the first meeting of the above mentioned sub-committee, held on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1951 in the presence of 'some seven or eight other Football Association and Football League representatives'<sup>164</sup>: the Chairman and Secretary of the FA, the Chairman of the League, representatives of the Irish and Welsh FAs (de Lotbinière joined the meeting after it had been in session an hour, while representatives of the Players Union and of the Association of Supporters Clubs were asked to give their respective views for a few minutes).

As far as televising of FA matches was concerned, regarding the Cup Final it was recommended that the game 'could be televised in full if postponed a week. Otherwise the existing ban to remain'. But, although it was noted that 'no mention was made of inadequacy of television fees', and that there was a 'fairly friendly atmosphere throughout the meeting', de Lotbinière had a strong feeling that the general idea was that 'the BBC had been getting something for nothing for far too

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<sup>163</sup> BBC WAC, R30/919/1 – 9 July 1951, 'Board of Management Meeting: 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1951'.

<sup>164</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/11 – 2 August 1951, 'Note on the first meeting of the FA sub-committee on broadcasting and television'.



long, while prepared to pay big fees elsewhere'<sup>165</sup>. Thus, the only conclusion that the Head of BBC OB could draw was that

'if, as seems fairly inevitable, the BBC is to make a financial concession, I believe that the best move would be to negotiate for facility fees as they are and for a lump sum payment to be made to some general purposes football fund, e.g. a Players Benevolent Fund. This would help to maintain the fiction of the facility fee, but it presents certain problems since we may find the national associations each wanting its own grant.'<sup>166</sup>.

Eventually, in mid-September, a decision on the live TV broadcasting of the 1952 Cup Final was taken:

'there will be no direct television of the Football Association Cup Final at Wembley on May 3, but a broadcast of the second half will be allowed, and if the BBC desire they will be given facilities to make film for televising after the game.'<sup>167</sup>.

The agreement for televising the game after the final whistle was that the BBC would not be allowed to do so for 48 hours after the match. Not the best agreement the BBC could have hoped for.

The BBC did not give up, though, and pressed on the FA, especially on Rous<sup>168</sup>, until the very day of the Final. It was highlighted that many of the matches to be played on the same day of the Final were being transferred to other days and that kick-off times were being adjusted so as not to clash with the Cup Final (one of the main worries of the FA was loss of gates in other matches played contemporaneously to the final); it was promised that no publicity at all would be

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. De Lotbinière refers to both sound and TV broadcasting.

<sup>167</sup> *The Times*, 18 September 1951 (6b).

<sup>168</sup> Dimmock to Rous: '(...) I was wondering whether there was the slightest chance of you and your Committee being able to agree to the last half-hour of this year's Cup Final being televised. Naturally, we would have very much liked the second half, but I quite understand your anxiety concerning the position of other matches which are due to be played on that afternoon. If we were to televise the last half-hour might this not make it possible for the other matches to adjust their kick-off times? With all good wishes.', BBC WAC, T14/93/13 – 21 April 1952, Dimmock to Rous.



made in the *Radio Times*; it was pinpointed how the BBC and the FA should bear in mind ‘those football fans who are either ill or too old to be able to travel to the game’<sup>169</sup>. But, despite all those efforts,

‘The Football Association’s ban on the televising of the Cup Final match between Arsenal and Newcastle United at Wembley to-day is still in force. After the F.A. Council had considered the matter yesterday it announced that the “general purposes committee was unable to recommend that its previous decision should be rescinded”.’<sup>170</sup>.

Therefore, those who had not managed to get a ticket to enter Wembley stadium for the Final, had the Radio broadcast of the game as only alternative.

### Solving the deadlock

While the BBC were desperately struggling with the FA, and the League was keeping its attitude of total opposition towards any kind of broadcasting (‘The Football League, at its annual meeting in London on Saturday, maintained its opposition to the televising of league matches’<sup>171</sup>), the controversy with the APCS was doing nothing but adding salt to the BBC’s wounds. When the advisory committee that had been appointed in July 1950 by the Postmaster General produced its first report in May 1951, everybody interested in the issue was holding their breath. The ‘Sports Television Advisory Committee’ had held five meetings before April 1951, in which an investigation into the sporting events televised throughout this period had been carried out. The conclusions drawn after this enquiry were that:

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<sup>169</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/13 - 25 April 1952, Dimmock to Rous.

<sup>170</sup> *The Times*, 3 May 1952 (6b).

<sup>171</sup> *The Times*, 9 June 1952 (6f).

- a) penetration of television into the section of public that attended sporting events was at present very slight, making it ‘extremely difficult’ to measure the effects of televising sport events or to forecast these effects when television would be more widely developed;
- b) a long-period study would have to be conducted in order to assess the effects of the use of television and the way viewers change habits;
- c) the ‘only’ certain point was that the televising of certain major events, such as the FA Cup Final, resulted in reduced attendances at other sporting events held on the same day, and that the effect is even more marked at minor sporting events;
- d) attention should be given to the ‘harmful consequences’ of reduced gates at minor events, since the minor clubs form an ‘important nursery for the development of sporting talent’<sup>172</sup>.

Because of these conclusions, things did not find any reasonable settlement, and in the next months discussion was still open. The APCS did not show any desire to recede from their position. They were not contrary in principle to television; they only wanted to get a fair economic reward for the exploitation that could be made of television broadcasting by third parties. This position was made even clearer than by Mr Gentle, vice-chairman of the APCS:

‘A promoter of a sporting or spectacular event should be placed in the same legal position regarding the televising of his production as the author, composer, or playwright. (...) when a fight was televised from Birmingham “people went round the streets looking for television aerials, and paid 2s. 6d. to go into private houses to view it”. Where sporting events were televised the promoter had no protection against third parties using them for public exhibition.’<sup>173</sup>.

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<sup>172</sup> For the whole picture of the issue of copyright in this period see the documentation included in: TNA, HO 256/720; TNA, HO256/26.

<sup>173</sup> *The Times*, 26 September 1951 (7d).



Another fear of the APCS was, as mentioned also in the committee report, the one regarding the loss in gates and interest in other events held elsewhere at the same time of the TV broadcasting of a major event.

Therefore, lacking clear legislation on the matter, the situation seemed stuck in an *impasse* that was not helpful either for the sporting organisations or the BBC, or more generally speaking for the people themselves. And the Post Office did not look as they were in a rush to handle this hot potato. Between May and June 1952 the House of Lords discussed the problem: ‘This is a matter in which the public of this country are greatly interested’, declared Earl Jowitt on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, in a matter where ‘sectional interests must give way to the general interest’<sup>174</sup>. And on 25<sup>th</sup> June Lord Morrison called attention to ‘the need for an early solution of the problem of the presentation of sporting events of national importance in television’. Lord Morrison complained that ‘no clear statement of Government policy on this particular matter had been given’, adding that ‘for nearly eight years the interests involved had been seeking a solution of the problem but had not found one’. The main worry that had moved him to raise the problem was that ‘millions of people were interested to know why they could not see national sporting events on television’, certainly referring to the ban on televising of the FA Cup Final. As a matter of fact, and as highlighted by Lord Lucas during the discussion, the Government had been quite dilatory in facing the matter, after that the committee had handed their final report at the end of 1951. Only Lord de la

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<sup>174</sup> TNA, HO 256/720, ‘Extracts from the debate on the White Paper on Broadcasting in the House of Lords on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> May, 1952’.



Warr spoke in defence of the Government, saying that 'he could not say much now about the Government's intentions but he would give a firm assurance that the matter was being seriously considered'<sup>175</sup>. The only reply by the Postmaster General at this stage was that he did not think 'it would be right (...) to attempt to bring pressure to bear on the Committee, who (...) are dealing with a very difficult question as expeditiously as they can'<sup>176</sup>.

Finally, in October 1952 an end to the vexed question seemed to dawn. The Copyright Committee made the following proposals in order to solve the deadlock between the BBC and sports promoters:

'No right should be vested in promoters to prevent or control the copying or recording of sporting events. (...) The B.B.C. or any broadcasting authority (...) should have the right to authorize and control public performances of its television programmes, but not its sound broadcasts. (...) such an arrangement would enable the B.B.C. to control the public performance of television programme in a cinema, for instance, while at the same time it would enable the B.B.C., from the fees so earned, to pay sports promoters and others the additional sums required which it is at present unable or unwilling to pay.'<sup>177</sup>.

In such a way, promoters would be enabled to recoup themselves for any financial loss that might be caused by the televising of the event. Furthermore, among the other recommendations, the committee suggested that the government should adhere to the international convention for the protection of literary and artistic work signed at Brussels in 1948, consequentially causing important amendments to the Copyright Act of 1911. Finally, the committee proposed for the setting up of a special tribunal to settle disputes between the collecting societies and licences.

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<sup>175</sup> In *The Times*, 26 June 1952 (3c).

<sup>176</sup> TNA, HO 256/720, 'Draft speech for P.M.G.'.

<sup>177</sup> *The Times*, 14 October 1952 (2c).

Reaction of the APCS to the report was quite positive:

‘The report was considered to be of such importance that it had been decided to put its contents before the members of the Association for the Protection of Copyright in Sport as soon as possible.’<sup>178</sup>.

Gentle declared himself ‘pleased the Copyright Committee had recognized that members of the association were entitled to some form of protection’. The same kind of pleasure was manifested by Sir Elvin, who said that it was very satisfactory that the committee had ‘effectually disposed of the suggestion contained in the Beveridge Report to give the broadcasting authority legal right to televise sporting spectacles irrespective of the wishes of the promoters’<sup>179</sup>.

Finally, after more than 18 months of negotiations, the Postmaster General decided, with the agreement of the chairman, Lord Beattie, to wind up the Sports Television Advisory Committee, suggesting that the best way of dealing with the problems of showing more sport on television would be a closer consultation between the BBC and sporting organisations and promoters.

To summarise the final result of this long dispute, the most important point to highlight is that from now on the BBC would have to pay much higher fees than in the past if they wanted the right to televise any kind of sporting event. The immediate evidence of this new situation is given by the fact that, after two years of almost complete blackout (in 1951 the Newcastle-Blackpool game had been televised only for the second half, while in 1952 there had been no live television at all of the Final), as far as the 1953 FA Cup Final was concerned, ‘the British

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<sup>178</sup> *The Times*, 21 October 1952 (2d).

<sup>179</sup> *The Times*, 14 October 1952 (6c).



Broadcasting Corporation had agreed to televise the whole of the F.A. Cup Final at a fee of £1,000'<sup>180</sup> (on a total cost of £1,080 for the whole OB<sup>181</sup>).

The 1953 FA Cup Final, better known as the 'Coronation Cup' or 'Stanley Matthews' Cup', was then televised, and, as de Lotbinière commented, 'the game was a gift to television'<sup>182</sup>, reaching for the first time a massive audience. That match, won by Matthews' Blackpool 4-3 over Bolton Wanderers, can be considered as the decisive legitimisation of the bond between television, the monarchy, and a national sporting event such as the FA Cup Final. As highlighted by Johnes and Mellor, celebrations of both the Cup Final and the Coronation fed a sense of consensus and unity in the nation; and the presence of the Queen represented optimism in the future, an optimism closely linked with a technological progress that was epitomised by television<sup>183</sup>.

Quality of the OB production was top-class, as reported on *The Listener*: 'Full marks also to the o.b. cameras for bringing us such good pictures of the Cup Final that it was easy to forget the dull passages that had gone before'<sup>184</sup>. And top-class was also the OB of the England-Rest of the World game played at

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<sup>180</sup> *The Times*, 26 February 1953 (8b). For the 1950 Cup Final a facility fee of £250 only had been paid by the BBC to the FA. Negotiations with the FA had gone through a first attempt by the BBC to offer £750 as facility fee, an offer 'which goes well beyond anything we have yet paid for any sporting event', BBC WAC, T14/93/13 – 11 November 1952, de Lotbinière to Rous. As was eventually evident, the BBC, in consideration of the extraordinary increase of TV licences (1952: 1.449.260 at £2; 1953: 2.142.452 at £3) were ready to offer more. Rous to de Lotbinière: 'I am writing to confirm that The Football Association accepts the offer of the B.B.C. to pay £1,000 for the facilities to televise the whole of the Cup Final', BBC WAC, T14/93/14 – 4 March 1953, Rous to de Lotbinière.

<sup>181</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/14 – 2 May 1953, 'FA Cup Final – Final Estimate'.

<sup>182</sup> Quoted in Briggs, *Sound & Vision...*, p. 861.

<sup>183</sup> See Johnes, Martin/Mellor, Gavin, 'The 1953 FA Cup Final: Modernity and Tradition in British Culture', in *Contemporary British History*, Volume 20, Issue 2 June 2006, pp. 263-280.

<sup>184</sup> *The Listener*, 14 May 1953 (815).



Wembley on 21<sup>st</sup> October to commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of the FA, as again reported by Reginald Pound in *The Listener*:

‘The big football match at Wembley, restored my self-esteem as a critic. For one thing, there was nothing to criticise and much to appreciate: first-rate television. I thoroughly relished eighty-nine of its ninety minutes, the last minute of all, in which we got the equalising goal, filling me with nervous apprehension about our national prestige. The camera crews earned a vote of thanks for demonstrating there a high sense of duty to the viewing million or so. They kept up remarkably with the often tremendous pace and enabled us to see some fine football.’<sup>185</sup>

Commentator on the game was Kenneth Wolstenholme, at a fee of £21<sup>186</sup>: it was the definitive consecration of this young commentator as the new official voice of football at the BBC.

### Turning the floodlights on

The new regime of raising fees was providing the results hoped for by both the BBC, which could therefore start new negotiations with the FA for broadcasting a wider range of games under the FA’s jurisdiction, after two years of almost total deadlock, and the FA, which could now ask for more money (in form of increased facility fees) without being (and looking) too greedy, and which could follow Rous’ idea that TV broadcasting, if reasonable, could do only good rather than harm to the game.

Therefore, when the Corporation sent to the FA a list of fixtures they would like to televise (Cup Final and early Cup Ties involving only amateur clubs;

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<sup>185</sup> *The Listener*, 29 October 1953 (742). Not only was the game televised live on the BBC in the afternoon, but a tele-recording of the highlights was shown at night.

<sup>186</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/14 – 2 May 1953, ‘FA Cup Final – Final Estimate’. Usually there were 2 commentators of different geographic origin, in order to give equal treatment to both teams; but this time, considering that both sides contending the Cup were from the same part of England, Wolstenholme was considered ‘enough’, and the BBC could save some guineas.

Amateur Cup Ties, including the Final; Internationals; Amateur Internationals and other representative matches; evening floodlit matches), Rous confirmed that the FA would give permission to televise all the games asked for 'subject to satisfactory financial terms being arranged'<sup>187</sup>. To give an idea of what could be considered 'satisfactory', the fee for the 1954 FA Cup Final was £1,500, an increase of 50% in respect to 1953<sup>188</sup>.

It is very instructive to see, thanks to a confidential report made by Rous to de Lotbinière, how the sub-committee for broadcasting and television had arrived at this decision. After that the Chairman of the League had begun the discussion by suggesting £7,500 or £10,000 (!), the amateur element of the committee said, more pragmatically, that it would be ridiculous to ask such a sum with an increase of 1,000% and to put the FA into all sort of difficulties with various interests, including players, referees, linesmen and ball-boys, who would think that out of a sum of that size they should get a rake off. The committee decided then for £2,000, but Rous pointed out that this would represent a 100% increase, while suggested that a 50% increase would be more appropriate. So it was<sup>189</sup>.

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<sup>187</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/15 – 8 July 1953, Rous to de Lotbinière.

<sup>188</sup> For the second half of Internationals the usual fee would be £250. In BBC WAC, T14/93/15 – 6 October 1953, Rous to de Lotbinière.

<sup>189</sup> De Lotbinière's comment was: 'As usual a big increase in any one facility fee has repercussions elsewhere. I would reckon that these repercussions would be particularly noticeable with other major events, but would in the long run have some inflationary effect on all sports "facility fees". I would guess at the following major repercussions: Test Matches: Present payment £1,000 – New payment £1,250/£1,500 (depending on Touring Team); Wimbledon Fortnight: £1,500 > £2,250; Major horse racing (Saturdays) £200 > £300; Rugby Internationals: £250 > £350; Amateur Boxing (International): £250 > £350; Boat Race: £500 > £750 (not before 1956). Sports facility fees for 1952 (186 daily broadcasts totalled £15,000. When the 1953 Cup Final was agreed at £1,000 (previously £250 for half the match) I estimated that this might in the long run bring such a total of £30,000. Sports facility fees for 1953 (184 daily broadcasts) will have worked out at £23,400. I estimate that the new Cup Final might involve an additional annual increase of £8,000, of which £5,000 might be felt in 1954. My recommendation is that we accept the F.A. offer – in spite of its repercussions.'. BBC WAC, T14/93/15 – 27 November 1953, 'The Cup Final'.



Even the League seemed to have changed a little in their attitude towards television. And even though the final answer had always been negative, the way of negotiating was now softer. For instance, when in June 1952 de Lotbinière wrote to Drewry, President of the League, saying that the BBC 'still feel that there should be some form of compromise which can provide good broadcasts for viewers and at the same time do more good than harm to football'<sup>190</sup>, Drewry answered frankly, but friendly, that

'Television is a difficult one and, in the face of falling gates and increased entertainment charges by way of duty, clubs were not inclined to relax in favour of more television. Thank you for your offer to confer at any time. I hope it will be possible for us to meet to discuss the matter whenever it is thought that some fresh consideration might affect the clubs' attitude.'<sup>191</sup>.

However, it should be noted that, during the FA meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1952 regarding the permission to broadcast and televise the 1953 FA Cup Final, Drewry proposed that permission to televise the match should be refused, but that permission be given for filming the game and broadcasting it after the final whistle<sup>192</sup>.

The BBC were suddenly helped in this struggle with the League for live football during the 1952-53 season thanks to midweek floodlit football. When de Lotbinière was given information that on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1952 there would be a floodlit football match at Highbury between Arsenal and Hibernians, he thought that the BBC 'should try to secure a broadcast – if only of the last half

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<sup>190</sup> In asking the League to consider the possibility to let the BBC televise half a dozen of reserve matches during next season. In BBC WAC, T14/93/13 – 5 June 1952, de Lotbinière to Drewry.

<sup>191</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/13 – 10 June 1952, Drewry to de Lotbinière.

<sup>192</sup> The proposal 'that the whole of the Cup Final to be played on the 2nd May, 1953, be televised' by Mr. K.A. Milner and seconded by Mr P.M. Bartlett was the one that was eventually carried and led to final permission by the FA to televise the whole game live. In BBC WAC, R30/919/1 – 20 March 1953, 'Extract from minutes of the FA meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> July, 1952'.



hour', because he felt that it was important for them 'to break in on League football of this class and this is an opportunity when the League could hardly object'<sup>193</sup>, in view of the fact that the match was a charitable occasion in aid of the National Playing Fields Association. He thought that a fee of £150 would be a reasonable one. It is interesting to recall the fact that in 1950 a fee of £250 had been paid for the whole of FA Cup Final to be televised live, while this sum was now offered for 30 minutes of friendly football.

The game was eventually televised, as well as another floodlit match between Manchester United and Newcastle, and this caused a bit of turmoil. Howarth immediately after the TV broadcasting of the two games approached de Lotbinière underlining the 'difficult situation which has arisen'. Howarth noted how the two matches had been televised in spite of the prohibition placed by the League on any live television of matches in which League Clubs participate. However, while keeping a firm prohibition on any televising for the ongoing season ('I am to ask you (...) if you would please instruct your Television department not to approach any Football League Club for facilities to televise any match in which they are engaged, except, of course, the Football Association Challenge Cup Final Tie'), the Management Committee expressed the 'intention at the next Annual Meeting to propose some amendment whereby under certain conditions certain matches affecting League Clubs may be televised'<sup>194</sup>.

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<sup>193</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/13 – 30 July 1952, 'Floodlit Football'.

<sup>194</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/13 – 28 October 1952, Howarth to de Lotbinière. Very polite, as well as quite sarcastic was de Lotbinière's answer: 'I am sorry our television excursions to Manchester and Arsenal worried you and your committee. Perhaps we ought to have known better. (...) Meantime my apologies if we have erred.', in BBC WAC, T14/93/13 – 31 October 1952, de Lotbinière to Howarth.

When the AGM was held in mid-June 1953 (after that another floodlit game had been televised, a London-Berlin match for the Fairs' Cup, from Arsenal Stadium on 11<sup>th</sup> March), this new 'less-negative' attitude was actually displayed, as was reported in the newspapers:

'It was decided that for season 1953-54 no objection be raised to the televising of matches played by League clubs which do not interfere with League fixtures played at the same time, and that the F.A. be notified that in the opinion of the League the Cup Final should be arranged for a day free from scheduled League fixtures.'<sup>195</sup>

Of course the clubs, even though 'they were not against television in principle', wanted 'a measure of control so that their own fixtures would not suffer financially'<sup>196</sup>.

The televising of floodlit matches, often featuring foreign clubs coming from continental Europe and international stars like Ferenc Puskas, and 'introducing viewers to a new era of mid-week European football that would blossom in the late 1960s'<sup>197</sup>, continued for quite a while, and the League soon became accustomed to give their permission to it. For instance, when a floodlit game was played at Tottenham early in autumn 1953, Howarth declared he did not think, 'as a personal view, (...) there will be any objection to the proposed television broadcast of the second half'<sup>198</sup>, even though he asked de Lotbinière 'not to complete the arrangements until I have consulted my Management Committee on the 13<sup>th</sup> September next'<sup>199</sup>. And when de Lotbinière asked

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<sup>195</sup> *The Times*, 15 June 1953 (10c).

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Boyle/Haynes, *Power Play...*, p. 43.

<sup>198</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/15 – 19 August 1953, Tottenham Hotspurs to BBC.

<sup>199</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/15 – 20 August 1953, Howarth to de Lotbinière. The OB of this game was particularly appreciated: '(...) the flood-lighting at the Tottenham Hotspurs' ground (...) enabled us to participate enjoyably in some of the good moments provided by English and French



Howarth if the League would be prepared to let the BBC televise part of the floodlit friendly match between 3<sup>rd</sup> Division South Millwall and 1<sup>st</sup> Division Sheffield United on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1954, Howarth replied in less than three days: 'I do not think this can interfere with any other match involving League Clubs and accordingly we shall raise no objection',<sup>200</sup>. The match was eventually televised.

The BBC, on the other hand, tried to be as collaborative and respectful as possible, as it can be seen when, in communicating to the League that the Corporation had contacted Reading F.C. for permission to televise the second half of a midweek floodlit football match against a 3<sup>rd</sup> Division North side on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1955, it was highlighted that the letter to the club in question 'did contain a clause to the effect that they would seek your (*the League's*) permission before agreeing to the telecast',<sup>201</sup>. The BBC had chosen to follow the 'fair play' modality, at least for now. In years when the BBC, due to the League ban, had their Saturday afternoon schedules full of amateur football matches, floodlit games allowing them to screen professional football were too important a feature to risk losing by being either greedy or aggressive in their approach.

In 1953 the BBC registered 2,142,452 TV Licences, and in the country more TV sets than radio sets were manufactured. This trend was boosted by some exciting OB productions like the 1953 Coronation. On 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1953, the

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footballers (...) Watching the motion came up that floodlighting scientists may eventually obviate last week-end's dreary domestic chore, putting the clock back. Presumably these massively illuminated affairs mean new optical problems for the television outside broadcast teams. Their cameras (...) were manipulated with an assurance that gave us some wonderfully bright pictures (...)', *The Listener*, 8 October 1953 (610).

<sup>200</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 2 February 1954, Howarth to de Lotbinière.

<sup>201</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 10 February 1955, Dimmock to Howarth.



Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in Westminster Abbey really opened a new era for television. Five cameras of the OB department, were allowed for the first time inside the Abbey, apparently as a result of an intervention of the Queen herself. Richard Dimbleby commentated on the 'Coronation Service', which lasted more than seven hours, being transmitted from 10.15am to 5.20pm. It was without any shadow of doubt a television triumph. It has been calculated that about 20 million viewers saw the Queen crowned, representing 56% of the adult population of Great Britain<sup>202</sup>, and that the year after the broadcasting of this event the number of BBC television licences rose by 50%<sup>203</sup>: 'television was now in the process of becoming the principal instrument both of public information and of national cultural identity', as pinpointed by John Corner<sup>204</sup>. 1953 was the year when the TV service truly had its definitive boost in Britain, and football had surely played an important role.

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<sup>202</sup> About 8m viewers watched the Coronation in their own homes, while well over 10m watched it at friends' homes. See: Briggs, A., *The BBC: The First Fifty Years*, Oxford: 1985, p. 275.

<sup>203</sup> 1952: 1,449 TV Licences paid; 1954: 3,249 TV Licenses paid. It must be said that until 1<sup>st</sup> February 1971 there were two different licenses to pay, one for the Radio and one for Television. Source: Seymoure-Ure, *The British Press...*, Table 4.2.

<sup>204</sup> Corner, J., 'Television and British Society in the 1950s', in Corner, *Popular Television...*, p. 4.

## Chapter II

### *Competition Changed It All, 1954-64*

*'Basically big money talks and that was why our offers last year received such scant attention.'*

(Jack Oaten, BBC Sports Organiser Television, 28 March 1957<sup>1</sup>)

In the first half of the '50s domestic sales of consumer goods grew very rapidly, showing a rising affluence, with huge increase in sales of refrigerators, washing machines, and, of course, TV sets: 'it was truly a sellers' market'<sup>2</sup>. As Edward Royle highlights, 'a family's status was henceforth to be measured not by whether they kept a servant (...) but whether they had more domestic gadgets than their neighbours'<sup>3</sup>; and, according to Corner, 'the ownership or rental of a television set was (...) passing through and out of the stage of being a marker of status within the working class'<sup>4</sup>. Although, if in the very early days the ownership of television sets had been an important status symbol, 'the aerial on the roof becoming almost a sign of having arrived in the affluent society', as stated by Hill<sup>5</sup>, 'TV was on the way to becoming a standard feature of every

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<sup>1</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 28 March 1957, 'Football League'.

<sup>2</sup> Morgan, Kenneth, *Britain since 1945 – The People's Peace*, Oxford: 2001, p. 124.

<sup>3</sup> Royle, Edward, *Modern Britain. A Social History, 1750-1985*, London: 1987, p. 280.

<sup>4</sup> Corner, 'Television and British...' , p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Hill, *Sport, Leisure...* , p. 109.

home'<sup>6</sup> (if in the early '50s no more than 10% of households had a television, by the late '60s only 10% did not<sup>7</sup>).

But that consumer society needed a lubricant in order to function smoothly. This lubricant was advertising; and to make things even easier, advertising wanted to go on TV. Then, in 1954, in an atmosphere of great parliamentary controversy, the Churchill government decided to introduce a competitor television network, which had the peculiarity of being commercial, being funded from advertising only.

The reasons for the fierce dispute that took place preceding the birth of the new commercial network have to be sought mainly in the routinism of the battle between the Conservative and Labour parties. To briefly summarise the situation, while the Conservative government, elected in 1951, pressed for a new television commercial network to be launched as soon as possible, the Labour opposition, encouraged by Lord Reith, the harshest of the opponents ('Somebody introduced Christianity into England. And somebody introduced smallpox, bubonic plague and the Black Death. Somebody is minded now to introduce sponsored broadcasting'<sup>8</sup>), did not want it at all. It has been said that Churchill's campaign in favour of the new network was a daughter of many mothers: the genuine idea of giving the population a wider range of choice in watching television, underlining the concepts of freedom and competition; the economic interests of certain businessmen within the Conservative Party, who were aided by American

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<sup>6</sup> Corner, 'Television and British...', p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> See Holt, Richard, *Sport and the British: A Modern History*, Oxford: 1992, p. 317.

<sup>8</sup> Lord Reith in the House of Lords, 22 May 1952. Quoted in Briggs, *Sound & Vision...*, p. 883. Lord John Reith had been the first Director-General of the BBC, holding the position from 1922 to June 1938.



commercial interests; and, why not, Churchill's revenge on the BBC for the alleged obstruction he received during the 1926 General Strike and for having been largely kept off the air in the '30s. In fact, there were specific background circumstances that weakened the opposition. As Tunstall points out,

'commercial television might never have happened at all had John Reith not been hostile to Winston Churchill in the 1930s, had not Attlee's partisan antagonism united the Conservatives behind ITV, had the BBC pressed for a second channel in the early 1950s or had the BBC listened to the advice of their TV enfant terrible, Norman Collins, rather than driving him –through frustration- to set up the commercial TV lobby.'<sup>9</sup>

The Television Act was passed in 1954, obliging the new network to 'inform, educate and entertain', following the same BBC standards. On 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1955 the first non-BBC transmission was broadcast in the London area by Associated Rediffusion<sup>10</sup>; six months later 1.5 million TV sets (18%) could receive a commercial television signal, while it took one year to cover more than half the country. The BBC was no longer the only television service in Britain. The ghost of competition, which the Beveridge Report seemed to have kept out of sight, had eventually materialised.

At least until 1954, the BBC had not been interested in paying to get exclusive rights for sporting events for the simple reason that there was no one to bid against, and offered only facility fees to sport promoters, underlining the social importance of broadcasting all the events of interest to the public, and pointing out the ability of television to make sports more popular. This was obviously a habit that would have to change with the appearance of a new

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<sup>9</sup> Tunstall, *British Media...*, p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> Associated-Rediffusion, later Rediffusion London, was the ITV contractor for London, on weekdays between 1954 (transmissions started on September 22, 1955) and July 1968.

competitor, commercial and independent, in the arena of British TV broadcasting. Competitive television would have the natural inclination to strive for exclusivity and to 'exploit sports to the utmost'<sup>11</sup>. Sport was to soon become one of the main battlegrounds 'in a fledgling ITV's attempt to assert superiority', as highlighted by Barnett<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, from the moment Independent Television started being seen as a serious threat to the BBC's authority in sports broadcasting, a series of long-term contracts for exclusive rights were signed with the most important Federations and Boards.

This chapter, framed between 1954 and 1964, analyses this very turbulent period, in which, in addition to the struggle between the BBC and the football authorities to get football on TV, there is the new issue of competition by commercial television. A first partial success by the BBC was obtained in 1955, when, for the first time ever, an agreement was reached to broadcast recorded excerpts from League matches. However, the problem of the League's opposition to 'live' television was to remain unsolved, despite the more commercial approach of new Secretary Alan Hardaker, who was unable to convince the Management Committee that money coming from TV could cover any loss in gates caused by the competition of televised football, which was their main worry. A preoccupation that was actually unfounded, at least according to the results of a research made in 1956 conducted to find out the effects of television among viewers in London, which showed how television, rather than distracting the population from the game, had enhanced the interest in football of 15.6% and

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<sup>11</sup> Barnett, *Games and Sets...* , p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Barnett, 'Sport...' , p. 88.



increased attendances at matches of 18.2%<sup>13</sup>. It is true that at the time of that research there was no live television of League matches, but a more open-minded understanding of the situation by the football authorities might have led them to take full advantages from this interesting piece of information.

In the meanwhile, Independent Television, despite various attempt to compete financially with the BBC in the area of televised football, and despite some casual success, such as when it seemed that an agreement with the League to broadcast live football had been reached in the summer of 1960, never really threatened the leadership of the Corporation in the televising of sport.

The commercial nature of the new network, rather than being an advantage, became a limitation. If the possibility of additional cash was certainly welcome, in fact commercialism did not fit at all with the tradition of public service broadcasting, where the public interest was still taking precedence over financial gain. At least until the late '60s, amateur associations would be scared of such an unholy connection with commercialisation. Furthermore, there was the regional structure of the commercial network to make things even more difficult. As highlighted by Sendall, 'there has been no area of programmes in which it proved more difficult to operate the plural system of ITV than that of sport'<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Source: Belson, William, *The Impact of Television. Methods and Findings in Program Research*, London: 1968, Table 5, p. 284.

<sup>14</sup> Sendall, Bernard, *Independent Television in Britain. Vol. 2: Expansion and Challenge, 1958-68*, London: 1983, p. 238.



## The end of the monopoly

If up to 1950 there had been TV broadcasting of odd sporting events spread throughout the year, mainly those that were considered part of the 'sporting calendar', the years immediately preceding ITV's birth, saw a group of sports programmes broadcast by BBC Television on a regular basis. *Television Sports Club* was launched in August 1950, while its development, *Television Sports Magazine*, a fortnightly programme introduced by Max Robertson, had twenty-one editions in 1951 and 1952. The aim of the programme was to focus on some topical aspects of a game, a point of technique or a point of procedure or rule, and call in the experts to find out what lay behind a particular problem, catering not only for the great body of knowledgeable sports fans but the thousands of viewers who had been introduced to sports via television<sup>15</sup>.

Among those programmes, the most famous and successful was, without any shadow of doubt, the Thursday night programme *Sportsview*, which had its first edition on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1954<sup>16</sup>. The value of this programme has to be highlighted not only for its quality in terms of production and editing as well as audience appreciation, but also for the fact that it definitely acknowledged the

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<sup>15</sup> Before those programmes in the pre-war years there had already been one monthly sports review, *Sporting Magazine*, as early as 1937, but its impact had been quite feeble.

<sup>16</sup> *Sportsview* switched from Thursday to Wednesday night (various hours of scheduling: for instance, in 1960 it was broadcast at 8.30pm, in 1962 at 8.45) in August 1955. The programme was on air until 1968. Regarding *Sportsview* in those formative years it is interesting to read the comment made by Reginald Pound in *The Listener*: '(...) 'Sportsview' is so good example [sic] of production competence, and it demonstrates so effectively the far-ranging primacy of television in scanning the immediately topical scene, that one would not wish to sound the note of discouragement. Few programmes arrive on our screens with a more impetuous rush of self-assurance, as if it has the suffrage of the universe. (...). All too few television programmes put us in touch with that harmony of aptitude and precision which gives us the thing called style. The social difficulty about 'Sportsview' is that it is not a women's programme. Generally women do not care about sports programmes.', *The Listener*, 20 September 1956 (436).

figure of a former racing correspondent who would later become Head of BBC Television's Outside Broadcasts department, Peter Dimmock. With the successive as well as successful launch of the Saturday night football highlights programme *Sports Special* in September 1955, introduced by Cliff Michelmore, and, especially, of the Saturday afternoon sport magazine *Grandstand*, launched on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1958 (being broadcast still nowadays, *Grandstand* is the longest running BBC's live sport programme, although now due to be axed by the BBC by 2009) and introduced by David Coleman (who would become one of the most famous commentators in televised sport), the portfolio of BBC regular sports programmes in those first years of competition can be considered complete<sup>17</sup>.

By the end of 1956 the commercial network overtook the Corporation in terms of average daily audience, with a BBC:ITV ratio of 38:62 for the 'prime-time' slot in the evening<sup>18</sup>; as a consequence, the incomes from commercial advertisements grew more and more, and ITV became a 'licence to print money', as media tycoon Roy Thompson put it<sup>19</sup>. Independent Television was therefore now strong enough to be a real threat to the dominant position of the BBC as far as negotiations for televised sports were concerned.

In particular, commercial television's contractors realised how live coverage of football could represent an extra boost in the struggle for the audience.

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<sup>17</sup> To have a better understanding of the importance of *Grandstand* as well as of the other pioneering sport programmes in the history of British television see: Whannel, G., "Grandstand", the Sports Fan and the Family Audience', in Corner, *Popular Television...*, pp. 182-196.

<sup>18</sup> Source: O'Sullivan, Tim, 'Television Memories and Cultures of Viewing, 1950-65', in Corner, *Popular Television...*, p. 168.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Tunstall, *The Media in...*, p. 39.



Therefore, from that year on the commercial network would try and try to get exclusive rights for live football on TV, starting harsh competition with the BBC.

However, in spite of all the efforts by both networks, the League never gave up, showing a moment of slight weakness only in 1960, when an agreement between the League and ITV was reached, and a League match was actually televised live. But it represented a freak event, never to be repeated in the future. That episode displayed, though, how the League, after that Alan Hardaker took over from Freddie Howarth during the 1956/57 season as Secretary, was on the way to change its attitude towards the televising of football.

### **To prevent is better than to heal**

Early in 1954 a new proposal regarding the live televising of the last fifteen minutes of a League match 'from time to time' was made by the BBC, given that 'broadcasts of this sort would attract people to professional football without the risk of keeping football fans at home'<sup>20</sup>. The request, needless to say, was something still unacceptable by the League, as Howarth wrote to de Lotbinière a fortnight after the proposal had been made:

'In further reply to your letter of the 10<sup>th</sup> February asking if there was any chance of the League accepting the idea of, from time to time, the last quarter-of-an-hour of League matches being televised, I have to inform you that it is my Committee's view that there would be no chance at all of the League Clubs accepting this suggestion.'<sup>21</sup>.

This effort was one of the last duties of Seymour J. de Lotbinière as Head of OB at the BBC: in the second half of 1954 Peter Dimmock took over.

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<sup>20</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 10 February 1954, de Lotbinière to Howarth.

<sup>21</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/16 – 24 February 1954, Howarth to de Lotbinière.



Dimmock's impact on televised sport at the BBC was extraordinary. 34 years old, former racing correspondent, he had joined the BBC in May 1946, when he was asked by Orr-Ewing to negotiate TV broadcasts from the most important races in England: Sandown Park, Kempton Park and Royal Ascot. His skill in negotiating contracts as well as in dealing with people made him well known in a few months not only within the OB department, but also inside the BBC and to every kind of sport promoters throughout Britain. When in spring 1954 he launched *Sportview*, he became also popular among the viewers. A few months later Dimmock, 'genial presenter and a powerful expansionist force in BBC sport'<sup>22</sup>, finalised his climb by being appointed Head of the OB department.

Under Dimmock, 'the BBC's great achievement was to exploit the dramatic possibilities of sport', bringing it 'nearer to other, more conventionally theatrical kinds of entertainment', as Andrew Crisell underlines<sup>23</sup>. Differently from his predecessor, Dimmock had a much more structured, as well as more aggressive, approach to the matter of live football on TV. This can be seen, for instance, in the first plan that Dimmock proposed to Howarth in late October 1954, just a few weeks after he had become 'Acting Head' of the OB department. The proposal suggested an experiment of live TV broadcasting of the last part of four games (one 1<sup>st</sup> Division match, one 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, one 3<sup>rd</sup> Division North, and one 3<sup>rd</sup> Division South) on four 'selected and non consecutive' Saturday afternoons, not

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<sup>22</sup> Holt, *Sport and the British...*, p. 316.

<sup>23</sup> Crisell, Andrew, *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, London: 1997, p. 98.

to be announced in the *Radio Times*, with a suggested facility fee of £125 per match<sup>24</sup>.

In the view of Peter Dimmock, this experiment would enable the BBC and the League to determine the effectiveness of TV broadcasting of football. Dimmock confirmed that the BBC were well aware that the present ruling was against live TV, but he pushed for this temporary solution because he thought it ‘would do nothing but good both for League Football and television viewers – particularly in so far as young prospective football fans and old people at home and in hospitals are concerned’. At the same time, he reassured Howarth that this was just a proposal, an attempt to find out whether ‘there might be a possibility of the matter being re-considered’, and that ‘this is not an attempt at the “thin end of the wedge”’<sup>25</sup>.

Howarth replied quite soon, and although he promised to bring the matter to the attention of the Management Committee at their meeting to be held on 9<sup>th</sup> November, he felt that permission for this experiment would be very unlikely, pressured as they were by clubs in the lower divisions fearing that live TV would drive away spectators<sup>26</sup>. Dimmock tried then to move a step backward, writing to Howarth that in his view ‘even one such experimental match would give the Management Committee and the League Clubs themselves much more to go on

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<sup>24</sup> A schedule was later proposed, and the games in question were as follows: 22 January, Division III South Gillingham-Reading or Millwall-Walsall; 5 February, Division I Arsenal-Preston; 19 March, Division II Bristol Rovers-Bury; 2 April, Division III North Chester-York City. See BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 25 October 1954, Dimmock to Howarth.

<sup>25</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 20 October 1954, Dimmock to Howarth.

<sup>26</sup> Small clubs from lower divisions were always considered as important as big 1<sup>st</sup> Division clubs within the League. The League structure was ordered to maintain some equality between big and small clubs, and the redistributive nature of the League ensured the survival of 92 clubs.



when they discuss the whole principle of Television'<sup>27</sup>. The League Management Committee did not share the same point of view, though, and when they met it was decided that, at least at the moment, no permission would be given for any selected League match to be televised, but that the matter would be raised again at the next Conference of the clubs in March. Dimmock had to accept this denial, but did not give up any hope of obtaining at least one experimental TV broadcasting after the meeting in March and before the end of the season, underlining how 'the popularity of Rugby League football has increased – partly due to television'<sup>28</sup>.

The situation languished for a little while. Then in February 1955, just a few weeks before the League Management Committee meeting, the BBC resumed pressing on the matter of televised League football. Dimmock wrote twice to Howarth. In the first letter he pinpointed to the League Secretary that he was

'quite sure that we can cooperate to our mutual advantage so far as live television of League Club football is concerned, and would particularly appreciate an opportunity to meet you and your Management Committee sometime so we could discuss the possibility of arranging a series of 'controlled' television dates for the 1955/56 football season.'<sup>29</sup>.

And again, just a few days after: 'I am most anxious to stress that with such co-operation I am sure that the potential 'shop window' of BBC Television can do nothing but good for League Football'. This time, just to add an element that was dear to the League, Dimmock faced the matter of attendances and of possible loss in gates:

'I sincerely believe that by giving viewers, and particularly the young viewer of today, who after all is the potential turnstile paying fan of

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<sup>27</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 2 November 1954, Dimmock to Howarth.

<sup>28</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 15 November 1954, Dimmock to Howarth.

<sup>29</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 7 February 1955, Dimmock to Howarth.



tomorrow, an occasional taste of League Football on a Saturday afternoon, attendances will, in the long run, improve throughout the four Leagues.’<sup>30</sup>.

But the idea that television could revitalise rather than jeopardise attendances and interest in the game was not to be taken in serious consideration by the League, with fears of collapsing gates, especially in the lower divisions (worries that were not so groundless, given that total attendances at League matches for the 1955/56 season would be 32,744,809 – the lowest since the restart of League football after the war<sup>31</sup>), mainly fuelled by the fear of the competition provoked by televised football rather than by other factors. Some of those factors were directly linked to the game, such as the diffusion of a ‘functional defensive mentality’ that was developing in football (and in cricket, too) in the post-war years, as pointed out by Reynolds and Brasher<sup>32</sup>; but there were other social factors of bigger impact that were driving away spectators, as pointed out by Holt and Mason in their recent history of sport in Britain: ‘rising affluence and increased choice of leisure activity, changing family structures and employment patterns as well as Saturday afternoon television’<sup>33</sup>.

The scheme that the BBC were proposing to the Management Committee to break their resistance was quite similar to the one proposed a few months earlier. It consisted of a maximum of six live transmissions of the second half or the last

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<sup>30</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 18 February 1955, Dimmock to Howarth.

<sup>31</sup> The peak had been reached in 1948/49, with a total attendance of the four divisions mounting to 41.2m. Data from Monnington, Terence (ed.), *British Sport in the Seventies*, Warwick: 1975, p. 54. On the trend of attendances in English football see also the interesting studies by Dobson and Goddard: Dobson, Stephen M./Goddard, John A., ‘The Demand for Standing and Seated Viewing Accommodation in the English Football League’, in *Applied Economics*, 24:10, 1992; Dobson, S.M./Goddard, J.A., ‘The Demand for Football in the Regions of England and Wales’, in *Regional Studies*, 30:5, 1996, pp. 443-453.

<sup>32</sup> Reynolds, E.E./Brasher, N.H., *Britain in the Twentieth Century, 1900-64*, Cambridge: 1966, p. 333.

<sup>33</sup> Holt, Richard/Mason, Tony, *Sport in Britain. 1945-2000*, London: 2001, p. 97.

half an hour of League matches to be decided in agreement with the clubs and the Management Committee during the whole season (of course the games in question would not be announced in the *Radio Times*). Furthermore, the BBC would be prepared to film or telerecord a certain number of League Matches throughout the season for transmission in the late evening.

### Those commercial people...

But the BBC was not alone anymore. There were the 'new kids on the block', the Independent Television companies, which were also interested in the televising of football. The terms and conditions of Independent Television's own proposal to the League have not been discovered, but surely the intervention of the new competitor gave the League Management Committee more things to think over. Thus, when the Management Committee discussed the matter of television early in March, the BBC's proposal was refused. Not in principle, though, but due to the fact that also Independent Television had made a bid. And this time the League seemed to be inclined towards a change of approach to the matter:

'Mr. Arthur Drewry (...) said after the meeting: "We have received proposals from the B.B.C. and the Independent Television Authority for the televising of our games and the matter will be discussed." It is believed that one of the proposals for televising an excerpt from a match which would be unidentified – as is the case in sound broadcasting – until the kick-off. Mr. Drewry said that opinion on television among the club was divided and a proposal would probably appear on the agenda of the league's annual meeting in the summer.'<sup>34</sup>

In the meanwhile, the only football broadcast on TV other than some Internationals and some FA Cup Ties were some friendly matches played during

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<sup>34</sup> *The Times*, 8 March 1955 (6c).



midweek under floodlighting. The League was no longer absolutely opposed to televised League football, in spite of rumours of a possible ban of all live football (League football on Saturdays as well as midweek floodlit friendly matches<sup>35</sup>). The new attitude appeared quite clear in May, a few weeks before the AGM, when news of commercial television making several offers broke in the press<sup>36</sup>. As a consequence of these offers, and as a demonstration of the fact that the League was now more open-minded, Howarth approached Dimmock and, as reported by Dimmock himself in writing to Rous, asked him 'to write to him again and suggest financial terms in connection with my proposal, as apparently the League have had an attractive offer from commercial television'. The offer by Independent Television was in the region of £1,000 a match to televise games in the London area the following season. This was an offer that went well beyond the kind of money spent so far by the BBC to televise a single match, the FA Cup Final apart. That amount of money added a new difficulty to the BBC in the negotiations with the League, given that, as Dimmock wrote to Rous, 'the financial consideration has never before seemed to be the real problem in connection with live television'. However, in Dimmock's view, that did not represent an insuperable obstacle, even if this new attitude by the League might

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<sup>35</sup> 'It would indeed be a sad blow if the League really do go through with their threat to ban all live television including floodlit matches', BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 24 May 1955, Dimmock to Rous. Indeed some trouble must have happened as far as televising of floodlit football was concerned, as testified by the disappointment of Harald Cox of the BBC OB department in writing to Arsenal's Mr Wall, organizer of a floodlit football mini-tournament, after having been told that televising it had been banned: 'I was very disappointed to hear that the Floodlit Cup Committee had banned all television from this season's competition (...). I hope that next season this ban may be reconsidered. I'm sure that a few broadcasts, limited to not more than half a match, could bring nothing but benefit to the sport, particularly as we are prepared to pay a very substantial fee for them.', BBC WAC, T14/95/2 – 29 May 1955, Cox to Wall.

<sup>36</sup> See *The Times*, 18 May 1955 (7g).



change the whole situation: 'if this is in fact the League's main worry then I am quite sure that we could come to some satisfactory solution, even if it meant confining matches to various transmitters'<sup>37</sup>.

In consideration of Independent Television's offer, Dimmock wrote to Howarth on the eve of the League Management Committee Annual Meeting in order to make a financial proposal on behalf of the BBC, even though he thought that 'this was the least of the problems (...) in connection with any 'live' television outside broadcasting of Football League matches on Saturday afternoons'. Dimmock assured Howarth that the Corporation would be prepared to offer between £500 and £1,000 ('depending on the calibre of the event') for the televising of a floodlit League match on a Saturday late afternoon. Interestingly, Dimmock did not exclude the chance of a shared televising of League matches with commercial television, and drew a possible picture of the future:

'I understand that the competitive television offer is, in the first instance, related to London coverage only and this will subsequently be extended to Birmingham and the North. We would always be prepared to consider televising a different match on the same afternoon in, say, the South, Midlands and the North but, on the whole, I feel that National coverage is probably in the best interests of League Football.'<sup>38</sup>.

When the Management Committee met on 4<sup>th</sup> June, the breakthrough so long hoped for seemed finally to materialise:

'Opposition to television was held by the management committee, but their original proposition, "That, for season 1955-56, matches in which League clubs take part, with the exception of the F.A. Cup Final, shall not be televised" was amended, then passed, with the addition: "Without permission of the management committee" (...)'<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 24 May 1955, Dimmock to Rous.

<sup>38</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 3 June 1955, Dimmock to Howarth.

<sup>39</sup> *The Times*, 6 June 1955 (3d).

The amendment to the initial ban was enough to give new courage to TV people in their efforts to get live League football on TV, giving Dimmock new hopes that this decision could mean 'that there is a chance of our being able to work out the experiment which we have suggested',<sup>40</sup>.

The BBC, in spite of the fresh money of Independent Television, was in a better position than the new competitor mainly for two reasons. First of all, the technical preparation and production quality of the new broadcaster were things still to be verified, especially in view of the experience and quality of BBC OB department<sup>41</sup>. Secondly, the fact the BBC had been negotiating with the League for so many years had granted the Corporation at least even opportunities in case of equal offers, as reported by Dimmock when in an internal circular he wrote that:

'Howarth re-affirmed, in front of Rous, that the Football League do not intend to grant commercial T.V. any live O.B's of soccer on Saturday afternoons and furthermore, he also re-stated his promise to me six month ago that if the League Management Committee decide anything about live T.V. then we will be given an equal opportunity. Howarth's own words were "the B.B.C. have always been very straightforward with us and we don't even know who are behind these commercial people".'<sup>42</sup>.

'These commercial people', though, were aware that the live televising of football, by far the most popular sport in Britain, would boost their audience

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<sup>40</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 6 June 1955, Dimmock to Howarth. Incidentally, Rous expressed his support to Dimmock: 'Dear Mr Dimmock, (...) I hope you will be successful in arranging a meeting with the Football League Committee and the clubs', BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 9 June 1955, Rous to Dimmock.

<sup>41</sup> ITV people were probably aware of this technical inferiority, and not only did they fear not being able to produce a quality broadcast, but they were afraid of the direct comparison with the BBC in the case of the same game being televised by the other competitor with the subsequent negative feedback from the audience: 'Associated Rediffusion have withdrawn their application to televise the England B. v. Denmark B. international from Portsmouth. Their excuse is that they cannot manage the circuit but it's probably because we also have the T.V. rights for this match', BBC WAC, T14/95/2 – 16 August 1955, 'Association Football'.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



figures and, consequently, their income from the selling of commercial advertisements; therefore they desperately tried to get some satisfaction from this front. Thus, along with the negotiations with the League for Saturday League football, they started to look for alternative football to show live on TV other than the FA's and the League's. They therefore tried to promote a five-a-side indoor League and a floodlit London League as well as an FA Youth Competition. Those moves by commercial television gave the BBC some worries, pushing Dimmock to suggest that the Corporation had better 'watch this carefully'<sup>43</sup>. A further front of competition was opened, and the BBC did not want to be overtaken by the newcomer: 'I (*Dimmock*) read this morning's Daily Express that there is now a Floodlit League mooted for Southern clubs and here again I do want to be sure that the commercial boys do not beat us to it'<sup>44</sup>.

### Highlighting football

Suddenly, in late summer 1955, the BBC decided to aim at a new, different goal: no longer live League football on Saturday afternoons, but the telerecording of up to three matches in order to show excerpts of about 5-10 minutes per game in a new programme scheduled on Saturday night. This change of tactic in the negotiations with the League can be explained only in consideration of the forthcoming debut of commercial television on British TV sets. Football on Saturday, regardless of it being live or recorded, would be a very important piece of programming in the likely battle for the audience, especially if it would be

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> BBC WAC, T14/95/2 – 13 September 1955, 'Floodlit Association Football'.



‘exclusive right’ of the Corporation. And if the League was a tough nut to crack as far as live football in the afternoon was concerned, perhaps it would be more malleable for other items of negotiations not colliding with clubs’ fears of collapsing gates due to competition by television. Therefore, Dimmock moved as soon as it was understood that time was running short before the arrival of the new competitor.

Official negotiations for the new plan began early in September 1955 and ran quite quickly. Dimmock made the first proposal to the Football League Management Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> September, speaking of filming up to ten matches on any Saturday of the football season to come. The day after, Dimmock corrected his statement, writing to Howarth that, after having reflected on the proposal, the most sensible as well as realisable plan was to limit this filming to just three matches on any one Saturday for a maximum of 75 matches throughout the season<sup>45</sup>. Along with this proposal Dimmock enclosed a copy of an agreement to be signed by the League<sup>46</sup>. The agreement, entitled ‘Exclusive contract for film and/or telerecording excerpts of Football League matches Season 1955/56’, consisted of 5 clauses. Clause 1 regarded the terms of telerecording or filming of up to 75 matches during the season and not more than 3 matches per Saturday, with the excerpts to be shown not to exceed five minutes per match, or ten minutes in exceptional circumstances<sup>47</sup>. Clause 2 explained the nature of the programme that would be presenting these excerpts to the viewers,

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<sup>45</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 14 September 1955, Dimmock to Howarth.

<sup>46</sup> A copy of the contract, with the signature of Freddy Howarth, is included in the Appendix.

<sup>47</sup> ‘The Football League explained that 10 minutes instead of five minutes would be allowed if on any particular day other telerecordings taken were not suitable for screening’, *The Times*, 22 September 1955 (8a).

a programme expected to run 30 or 40 minutes on any one Saturday night. The exclusivity of the showing of League football was the core of Clause 3, in which it was clearly stated that 'the Football League will not permit any film or telerecorded excerpts of Football League matches during the 1955/56 Season to be shown on commercial television'<sup>48</sup>. In Clause 4 the concept of exclusivity of TV broadcasting was strengthened by making clear that while the BBC would not have any objection to any commercial cinema newsreel company filming League matches, the Agreement would ensure that these companies could not subsequently 'sell or dispose of their film, in any way whatsoever, for showing on commercial television'<sup>49</sup>. Finally, in Clause 5 the BBC asked for a renewal for the 1956/57 season. The inclusive sum the BBC would pay for these facilities was £5,000<sup>50</sup>.

After having deleted Clause 5, which the Committee 'do not accept'<sup>51</sup>, Howarth accepted the terms and conditions included in the agreement and signed it. It was 15<sup>th</sup> September 1955, the very first time the League and the BBC reached an agreement for televising League football. It would not be 'live', but finally there would be League football on TV. The programme showing the

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<sup>48</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 14 September 1955, 'Exclusive contract for film and/or telerecording of Football League matches season 1955/6'.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> The first offer made by the BBC was for £3,500. See BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 14 September 1955, Dimmock to Howarth. The clubs concerned would receive a five guinea facility fee. It is very interesting to read the comment of John S. Richardson, OB Organiser, on the agreement: 'H.O.B. (*Dimmock*) has just negotiated with the Football League a contract for £5,000 to telerecord or film 75 matches during the season for sports programmes on Saturday evenings. This has not been estimated before as it was completely unknown and is only the result of competition that has forced us to pay this large sum of money.', BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 30 September 1955, 'Football League Contract'.

<sup>51</sup> But Howarth also reassured Dimmock 'that before any arrangements are made with any other organization for Television rights, you will be given the first opportunity to avail yourself of such facilities', BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 15 September 1955, Howarth to Dimmock.



highlights would be *Sports Special*, the pattern of which anticipated what *Match of the Day* would be like almost ten years later. The press was given the news only one week later, and the economic terms of the agreement were kept secret, but the Football League stated that 'the money would be used to the best advantage for the benefit of the players and the clubs'<sup>52</sup>.

Of course the agreement represented a huge blow for the keen expectations of commercial television, but it did not totally cut them out. Having been excluded by League football of any sort, Independent Television companies started approaching the FA, trying to break its exclusive alliance with the BBC. Therefore, while Dimmock was managing the agreement with the League, Associated Rediffusion were securing exclusive rights for a London v. Frankfurt match to be played at Wembley, after rapid negotiation with the London section of the FA. So, the League finally gave satisfaction to the BBC, showing that as long as television would not be a possible element of disturb to the gates, negotiations would be welcome; on the other hand, the FA displayed that their interest in television as a perfect instrument for the popularisation of the game was unchanged, no matter if the counterpart was the commercial network.

The method of negotiation and the consequent reaching of the agreement between the London FA and the ITV company made Dimmock very upset. He wrote to both Rous and Howarth to show his disappointment:

'As you know, it has always been our earnest desire to study the best long-term interests of Association Football so far as it is affected by television, and we have always been happy to negotiate directly with your Association and the Football League. Throughout these negotiations we have always been accorded the utmost consideration and I am most upset

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<sup>52</sup> *The Times*, 22 September 1955 (8a).



that new methods of negotiating should appear to seek to destroy this very happy understanding.’<sup>53</sup>.

‘I am a little disappointed, because while I thoroughly appreciate that the right of decision must, of course, rest entirely with the London F.A., it is the first time throughout all the happy relations that have existed between ourselves and the football authorities, that we have not been offered an opportunity of discussion or negotiation.’<sup>54</sup>.

Associated Rediffusion negotiated other contracts with the FA, for instance the England v. Ireland international to be played on 2<sup>nd</sup> November (£750 for the second half) and England v. Spain on 30<sup>th</sup> November (£1,500 for the whole match). But these were not exclusive agreements, as these matches would be televised also by the BBC at the same fee. The non exclusivity of international matches was taken for granted, because these games were considered of national interest, and commercial television was not available to whole population yet<sup>55</sup>.

The BBC proved to be agreeable enough to this sort of sharing, and a series of meetings was held between representatives of the Corporation and of the Independent Television Authority (ITA) on the matter of the televising of national sporting events. For instance, at the end of the meeting held in London on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1955, it was stated that ‘there had been a friendly exchange of views’, as reported on the press<sup>56</sup>.

Commercial television plans went even further, and aggressively explored new virgin areas. For instance, it was tried to approach some clubs to ask for exclusive rights on interviews and training stories related to their adventure in the

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<sup>53</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 28 September 1955, Dimmock to Rous.

<sup>54</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 28 September 1955, Dimmock to Howarth.

<sup>55</sup> 188,000 TV sets could receive ITV at the end of 1955 (5% of population). Those would be 1.5m (18%) at the end of 1956, and in August 1958 80% of population could receive both the BBC and ITV.

<sup>56</sup> *The Times*, 16 November 1955 (7e).

FA Cup competition, bypassing the approval of both the FA, which was the organiser of the competition, and the League Management Committee, which had the last word as far as clubs' attitude towards television was concerned<sup>57</sup>. This attempt surprised and upset BBC people, of course, probably more because of the fact that they had not even thought of this sort of programme rather than because ITV had tried to get exclusive rights. Thus it is not so surprising that a few months later, in spring 1956, the BBC itself obtained an exclusive contract with Birmingham City before their FA Cup Final against Manchester City: 'under the contract players and members of the training staff would not appear on programmes for anyone other than the B.B.C. between now and the date of the match'<sup>58</sup>.

### An 'exclusive' right to football

Competition was getting fiercer, and it seemed that football authorities started to realise that they would get the best out of this situation from the economic point of view. The FA began to raise their request for facility fees in the events they organised. These, it has to be remembered, were mainly of national interest and therefore their televising was almost always shared between the two networks. From one year to another there was a 150% increase in the FA

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<sup>57</sup> Interviews with players were already a feature within commercial TV football programmes as early as in September 1955, as noted by a 'respectful' Peter Dimmock in writing to Howarth: '(...) I would like to confirm that we will not use any professional Association football player in any of our sports programmes to comment about a match in which that day he has taken part. We noticed that Jackie Milburn appeared in the 5.30 p.m. commercial television (ITA) programme to talk about the match he had played in the same afternoon. (...)', BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 28 September 1955, Dimmock to Howarth.

<sup>58</sup> *The Times*, 28 March 1956 (10f).



Cup Final facility fee: from £2,000 in 1955 to £5,000 in 1956. The new situation pushed TV people to struggle in order to get mid- or long-term agreements to stop the galloping increase, as appears clear in what Dimmock wrote to Rous:

‘I should perhaps have made it clear that I merely wish to lengthen the terms of our existing contract to five years (...). I am sorry to have to ask for an extended contract but I am sure that you appreciate the necessity for this when we begin to pay such very large fee.’<sup>59</sup>.

Dimmock’s request obtained some satisfaction, even if not complete, when Rous confirmed that the FA had accepted to extend the terms of the £5,000 fee for the Cup Final up to season 1958/59. This probably meant that, even though the FA were aware of the potential increase they could ask of TV people, they did not want to push things too far and wanted to keep good relations with them.

But, of course, it was when the contracts concerned exclusive rights that the figures would get much higher. This was clear to the BBC, which was not opposed to the formation of a cartel with ITV in order to keep fees down. Exclusivity thus was no longer a priority. As evidence of this it is instructive to read how Dimmock, in approaching the League for the renewal of the existing ‘film contract’ concerning the 1956/57 League football season, pinpointed that the BBC

‘should of course again be pleased to have an exclusive agreement, but on the other hand, should you feel that a non-exclusive one including I.T.A. would be better, then I would be quite prepared to discuss this with you and their representatives.’<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/1 – 30 December 1955, Dimmock to Rous.

<sup>60</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 20 February 1956, Dimmock to Howarth.



And when in April 1956 Howarth communicated to Dimmock that Associated Television Ltd (ATV)<sup>61</sup> had offered a 'substantial sum' to televise the second half of a League match each Saturday for the next season, with the match in question to kick-off at 6.15pm not to clash with any other League match, Dimmock replied that 'the suggestion of a late kick-off is quite a good one and perhaps in this way it might be possible for both Commercial Television and ourselves to televise say on alternate Saturdays'<sup>62</sup>.

Sharing the televising of League football with Independent Television was seen favourably at the BBC also as far as the edited filmed highlights of League matches were concerned. When Dimmock was informed by Howarth that ATV, alongside to the offer for Saturday live football, had shown interest in getting exclusive rights for filming up to 3 League matches for 2-minute excerpts to be shown in a Saturday night programme, he declared to Howarth that, in the case the League decided to offer similar facilities and equal freedom of choice of matches to Independent Television, the BBC would be comfortable with that decision, reducing their offer though to £2,000 (instead of the £3,500 for exclusive rights for filmed excerpts of 2 games only per Saturday throughout the next season – and in either case less than the £5,000 paid for previous season).

Of course this opening the door to the concept of shared televised football did not rule out the possibility of getting exclusive rights for League football, and in the same letter where Dimmock had proposed the idea of sharing rights with

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<sup>61</sup> Associated TeleVision Limited, later ATV Network and best known simply as ATV, was an ITV company from 1955 until 1981. ATV began broadcasting on Saturday 24 September 1955. The company had won two ITV contracts, the Saturday and Sunday contract for London, and the Monday-Friday contract for the Midlands.

<sup>62</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 28 April 1956, Dimmock to Howarth.

Independent Television, he also suggested to Howarth a couple of alternative plans on the question of the live televising of League matches. Firstly he suggested that the BBC would be very much interested in the TV broadcasting of the last half-hour of a Saturday match with a delayed kick-off at 6.15pm, but rather than broadcasting the games any given Saturday of the season his thought was that 'it would be wisest to begin slowly on this whole question of 'live' television and our proposal is that initially we should televise ten League matches spread reasonably over the season'<sup>63</sup>, suggesting an offer of £15,000, including exclusive rights for the filmed excerpts<sup>64</sup>.

The second proposal was to arrange a series of midweek floodlit League football matches once a month (i.e.: 'to set aside a television night'), with the BBC showing the second half of these games at a fee of £1,000 per match. It is clear how Dimmock and the BBC were following two different strategies: on the one hand they were trying to get exclusivity in televising, either live or filmed, League football, highlighting how their 'vast television audience, covering as it does over 90% of the population of the British Isles, offers a shop window that is very much to the long-term advantage of League football'; on the other hand their aim was to set up a cartel with Independent Television authorities in order to reduce fees. In either case it is evident that the BBC did not contemplate the possibility of losing football in their programming<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 31 May 1956, Dimmock to Howarth.

<sup>64</sup> Sum to be reduced to £12,000 if no rights for the excerpts would be conceded at all or £13,500 if they would be conceded shared with Independent Television.

<sup>65</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 31 May 1956, Dimmock to Howarth.



However, the necessary requirement to let the BBC have what they wanted was that the other characters involved in the play would follow the same plot; and it did not seem that Independent Television had this intention when they offered £40,000 to televise the second half of 35 Saturday matches<sup>66</sup>. And League clubs did not seem to share the same view as the BBC when Kenneth Wolstenholme, who had spent the eve of the League AGM in London on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1956 ‘lobbying football club directors’, was told that the clubs ‘would not be prepared to accept anything less than the last season’ and that ‘some even said that if anything the sum should be higher’<sup>67</sup>.

The 1956 League AGM was to be a turning point. The BBC OB department sent two of their most valuable football commentators, Wolstenholme and Walley Barnes<sup>68</sup>, to the Park Lane Hotel and the Great Western Hotel in London in order to approach club Directors, Secretaries and Managers and to sound out their feelings on the matter of television before they started the meeting.

After their survey, both Wolstenholme and Barnes reported to Dimmock their feedback, which was anything but positive. The general impression was that the BBC, despite the fact that there were a number of clubs ‘very loyal’ to the

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<sup>66</sup> In the case of non-exclusivity, Independent Television would prefer a rota basis, given that ‘apparently ITA do not want to televise alongside us because everyone looks at the BBC!’, as reported in an internal memo of the OB Department, BBC WAC, T14/1447/1 – June 1956, internal memo. The BBC did not seem to agree, though: ‘this is to confirm the telephone conversation with Mr. Dimmock in which he told you that we do not really like the suggestion of ITA and the BBC sharing the important F.A. matches in the 1956/57 season on a rota basis.’, BBC WAC, T14/1447/1 – 2 July 1956, Jack Oaten to Miller of the FA.

<sup>67</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 2 June 1956, ‘The Football League and Television’.

<sup>68</sup> Former Arsenal and Wales fullback, Barnes joined the BBC immediately after retiring from playing in summer 1955.



Corporation, 'had not done as much liaison work as we should have done'<sup>69</sup>, and that, to put it in the words of Barnes, 'the thing that appears to rub the officials up the wrong way is the all-too-casual approach that the BBC have towards the number one form of entertainment in this country'. The suggestion that both the two BBC commentators got after their participation 'by hook and by crook' to the meeting, was that 'there ought to be a much closer liaison between the Television Outside Broadcasts Department and the football clubs, than there is at present time', because

'unless we get a closer liaison than we now have and someone with the necessary authority can meet the various members of the Management Committee, we will be hard pushed to keep the interests of the clubs on a fairly amiable footing with the BBC, as they are at the present time.'<sup>70</sup>

The BBC's 'casual' approach was also testified to by the reluctance they showed in raising their offers to the League. It was impossible to think of making the definitive breakthrough by keeping this sort of profile, especially in consideration of the absolutely different approach displayed by commercial television, which had offered a considerably higher bid: 'we had lost ground by offering a lower sum when I.T.V. had weighed in with £40,000'<sup>71</sup>. However, Wolstenholme's feeling was that despite such a big offer, Independent Television official John Graydon's 'personal lobbying throughout the fortnight had gone a long way towards putting I.T.A. into the lead'<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 2 June 1956, 'The Football League and Television'.

<sup>70</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 4 June 1956, 'Televising of Football League Matches'.

<sup>71</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 2 June 1956, 'The Football League and Television'.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. There was often confusion between the use of 'ITV' and 'ITA' in referring to Independent Television in the internal correspondence at the BBC.

£40,000 was not enough for the League, considering it ‘a measly sum’, or, ‘to put it in their own language “peanuts”’. The main objection from the League was that if they considered a basis of £1,000 per game (£35,000 per 35 Saturday League matches plus £5,000 for film excerpts) this represented little over 5,000 spectators in London, and something like 8,000 spectators in the provinces, where the prices for the stand seats were much lower<sup>73</sup>. Therefore, even though the smaller clubs were all in favour of accepting Independent Television’s offer, the bigger ones thought it was ‘chicken feed’, and they would only start serious discussion if there was an offer in the region of about £100,000: ‘if neither side made a decent offer, then neither side would get the facilities’. As Wolstenholme put it quite harshly to Dimmock, ‘the directors left me in no doubt that money still talks loudest of all’, and that he ‘lost count of the number of times people said “You’ve got competition now, and we must go to the best offer”’<sup>74</sup>.

The reports from the two ‘insiders’ at the League AGM must have impressed the OB Head, and must have led him to reconsider the whole policy about the televising of football on the BBC. The first thing he did was to write to all Regional Programme Heads in order to invite them to ‘possibly try to meet and discuss our proposals with as many influential football club directors as possible’, because he felt that ‘it may help our case’<sup>75</sup>. Then, as far as the

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<sup>73</sup> Average First Division gate: £5,000; Second Division: £2,500; Third Division: £1,500. See BBC WAC T14/448/1 – 5 June 1956, ‘Football League’.

<sup>74</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 2 June 1956, ‘The Football League and Television’.

<sup>75</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 5 June 1956, ‘The Football League – BBC Television Outside Broadcasts’. Regarding the opportunity of a more direct approach with the League, Jack Oaten, Sports Organiser Television, wrote to Dimmock on a telephone conversation with Howarth: ‘Mr Howarth would obviously prefer a personal visit to League Headquarters for discussion and indicated that this is what the other side are going to do in the coming week. (...) I got the overall impression that the League is impressed by the personal approach and is looking for it. (...) It



economic terms of their offers to the League were concerned, his thoughts were that entering a large-scale counter-bid might 'merely result in inflated fees', and that he 'would prefer to sit on the fence for one season' to wait for developments of the situation between the League and Independent Television, in order to 'be in a strong position possibly to outbid them for the following season'<sup>76</sup>.

Alternative plans to the Independent Television offer were still under serious consideration within the BBC OB department. For instance, *Sportsview* Unit Editor Paul Fox pinpointed that the OB department should be prepared to spend more money for live football, especially in consideration of the money spent in the last season for sports broadcasting on TV (£35,000 per 35 *Sports Special* programmes) as well as of their audience figures and reaction indexes, which were all very positive. 'But obviously, "live" football would get much higher figures, both in audience and reaction'. Thus he proposed to Dimmock:

a) to televise live League football only during the 'fair weather' months (from August to mid-November and from March to the end of the season) not to add further reason to the people to stay away from soccer other than bad weather spells ('In fact, we would thus be getting the best part of the League programme – the exciting start and the tense finish');

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seems to me that you, or both of us, perhaps with Paul Fox to look after his film contract, should see Howarth personally.', BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 14 June 1956, 'Football League 1956'.

<sup>76</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 5 June 1956, 'The Football League – BBC Television Outside Broadcasts'.



b) to stick to a graded system of payment per division that would keep expenses 'well within our budget'; as an alternative the BBC could propose a global fee of £20,000, including exclusive film rights<sup>77</sup>.

This last proposal was the official bid that Dimmock eventually proposed to the League at the end of June: £20,000 to televise 'live' 20 League matches (eleven in the period between 18<sup>th</sup> August and 27<sup>th</sup> October and nine between 2<sup>nd</sup> March and 27<sup>th</sup> April) from the various divisions (eight First Division matches, seven from the Second Division and five from the two sections of Third Division) to be played on Saturday afternoons at the normal kick-off time ('we believe that the evening kick-off on Saturday departs altogether too far from the normal pattern of the game in this country'), plus £5,000 for exclusive film rights for three matches per Saturday (or, in alternative, £3,500 for two matches only or £2,000 for non-exclusive rights). In their opinion this offer was better than Independent Television even if it involved a smaller overall sum, given that in fact 'pro rata our offer is every bit as good and does, we feel, offer greater advantages to the game on a long term basis'<sup>78</sup>.

As can be understood, the OB department seemed not to have realised that the route to follow was quite different. The problem was not to equal Independent TV's bid, or to outbid it by just a few pennies, but to give the League what the League wanted, and their minimum request for 'beginning discussion' over the

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<sup>77</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 5 June 1956, 'Football League'. The complicated system worked out by Fox guaranteed each club 25% of the gate receipts for the corresponding match the previous season and another 15% to go into a League pool: e.g., 'an Arsenal/Manchester United match would cost us roughly £1,375 to the club and £750 to the pool, whereas a Brentford/Coventry match would cost us £300 to the club and £110 to the pool.', *ibid*.

<sup>78</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 27 June 1956, 'Extract from a letter dated 27 June 1956 to Mr. F. Howarth, secretary of the Football League'.

matter was in the region of £3,000 per game, and not the £1,000 BBC were offering.

At this point a new bid by one of the Independent Television companies materialised. ATV presented a bid of £50,000 in return for exclusive film facilities as well as for 'live' television of the second half of 35 Saturday early evening matches for one season only, was now proposed. Furthermore, ATV offered to compensate the home club for any possible loss of gate with an insurance premium liability in the region of £10,000 for the 35 matches; they would also pay any additional expenses that might arise for either team due to the late kick-off, with a maximum estimated liability of about £3,000<sup>79</sup>. The total estimated outlay by Independent Television was about £65,000: 'it sounds a great deal but in fact is probably quite a sound commercial proposition for them'. Quite interestingly, detail of the bid had been given to the BBC directly and confidentially by the League 'because of the goodwill that still exists between the League and the Corporation'<sup>80</sup>, according to Dimmock, or because of the attempt to involve the BBC in a Dutch-auction.

If the BBC was to match ATV's bid, this would bring total expenditure on association football in any one season not far short of £100,000, if other commitments for internationals and representative matches were considered. The alternative plan was to try with Regional Leagues or amateur football, but this

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<sup>79</sup> ATV had also agreed to pay a per capita television fee of about £2 to the players involved in the game. See BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – June 1956, 'Live Television of League Football 1956-57 Season'.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.



would 'not offer a really worthwhile substitute'<sup>81</sup>. Thus, the two possible solutions were either to keep trying to convince the League that 'live' football on every Saturday of the season 'would not be in the best interests of the sport'<sup>82</sup>; or, alternatively, in the knowledge that the present offer for a limited number of Saturday matches was virtually unacceptable to the League, they might submit a mid-week proposition for the second half of 12 floodlit League evening matches at an inclusive fee of £17,000. Besides, it was considered the possibility of making a firm offer to the FA for 'live' Saturday evening television of one match in each round of the FA Cup on the delayed kick-off principle.

At the end of this internal speculation, the BBC's final bid to the League consisted of the offer for the 12 midweek floodlit games at a fee of £17,000 plus additional expenditures for the clubs involved<sup>83</sup>. At the same time a separate and substantial offer had been made to the FA to televise live on Saturday night the second half of one match for every round of the FA Cup from the first round to the semi-finals, for a total of £15,500 for seven matches. When Dimmock wrote to Drewry, then Chairman of the FA as well as President of FIFA, he presented this offer as 'considerably greater in proportion' if compared with ITV's offer to the League of £50,000 for 35 matches; meanwhile their offer would bring another advantage with it: 'the even wider publicity and national excitement that would be instilled among the general public for such a great Competition'<sup>84</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – June 1956, 'Visit with Sports Organiser, Television, to Football League Secretary at Preston 28th June 1956'.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 2 July 1956, Dimmock to Howarth.

<sup>84</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 2 July 1956, Dimmock to Drewry.

The BBC's moves were not enough, though, to prevent Independent Television from getting what they wanted so dearly. On 7<sup>th</sup> July 1956 the press reported this news:

'The management committee of the Football League has recommended acceptance of an offer of Associated Television, amounting to £50,000, for the right to televise one League game each Saturday night during next season, it was stated in a circular issued by the Football League yesterday.'<sup>85</sup>

The circular in question recommended that the clubs, due to meet in Manchester on 20<sup>th</sup> July to make the final decision on the whole matter of television, to allow ATV to televise the second half of 35 matches on the basis of one match per Saturday with kick-off time at 6.15pm<sup>86</sup>. The fee was £50,000 for one season ('subject to a formal contract ATV would be prepared to enter into a three- or five-year arrangement with the Football League Limited on the above basis'), and included exclusive film rights, thus excluding the BBC entirely. In addition to the fee, ATV would also pay the League a sum to meet any claim from the visiting clubs for extra nights' hotel expenses, as well as a sum to be paid into the Players Provident Fund and prices of any accommodation taken up at the grounds by the placing of cameras<sup>87</sup>.

The decision by the Management Committee came unexpectedly; but actually, as future League Secretary Alan Hardaker would report many years later, the surprising result of the meeting was mainly due to the fact that 'a large

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<sup>85</sup> *The Times*, 7 July 1956 (4d).

<sup>86</sup> Transmission would be only from London, Birmingham and Manchester transmitters.

<sup>87</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 6 July 1956, 'Television'.



number of the clubs who were strongly against live football did not attend the meeting'<sup>88</sup>.

It was a big blow indeed for the BBC, especially in consideration of the fact that the Corporation had lost any film rights whatsoever. Their strategy had been completely swept away. Therefore they tried a last desperate effort with a final counter-bid that was presented to the League on 20<sup>th</sup> July, the very day of their meeting in Manchester. This offer consisted of £30,000 for twenty Saturday matches and film rights (plus compensation and insurance for loss of gate and extra expenditures), and of £17,000 for twelve evening mid-week games<sup>89</sup>, the total amount offered being £47,000 (plus extras) for 32 games, which was more or less the same amount offered by commercial television. They were trying to stick to their principle of not having football on every Saturday of the season but raised their offer combining the live television of Saturday matches with the one for mid-week games. In such a way they thought to be in a position of advantage on Independent Television due to their longstanding tradition of sport TV broadcasting as well as of relationships and negotiations with the football authorities.

The point was, though, that the League wanted more, or they would not sell anything at all:

‘By 38 votes to 10, representatives of the 92 clubs in the Football League meeting in Manchester yesterday, rejected terms offered by Associated Television to televise matches next season and deferred indefinitely the whole question of live television of league matches. (...)

Mr. T.C. Nuttall, vice-chairman of Everton F.C., moved an amendment that the clubs did not approve of the scheme and that “the matter of live

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<sup>88</sup> Hardaker, Alan, *Hardaker of the League*, London: 1977, p. 223.

<sup>89</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 20 July 1956, Dimmock to Richards.

television of league matches be deferred". He said that if the Associated Television offer was accepted, the league proposed to reduce its levy on each club from 4 to 3 percent. This would cost the league £37,000, leaving only £13,000 of the television firm's main offer. Clubs should remember that other popular sports and entertainments had shown decreased takings throughout the advent of television, Mr. Nuttall added.'<sup>90</sup>.

£50,000 was not enough, and that was it. End of story.

After the disappointing decision by the League, the commercial television people realised that the most useful thing to do would be to set up a cartel to get at least the film rights, as had already been offered by the BBC. Therefore, Howard Thomas, Managing Director of ABC Television Ltd<sup>91</sup>, contacted Dimmock to show their new attitude:

'This is to confirm that we are delaying our bid to the Football League for the right to film matches for Television. My suggestion is that you should try to get non-exclusive rights at a reduced sum, and we might try to match (and not outbid) this price.'<sup>92</sup>.

An offer on these terms was then probably proposed to the League in late August, when the 1956/57 season had already started<sup>93</sup>; but this offer was rejected by the League that considered it 'inadequate' and asked the BBC to amend it if they wanted to get a contract for the remainder of the season<sup>94</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> *The Times*, 21 July 1956 (6b).

<sup>91</sup> Associated British Corporation (otherwise known as ABC Television or ABC Weekend TV) was one of a number of commercial television companies set up in the 1950s by cinema chains in an attempt to safeguard their business by getting involved in television which was taking away their cinema audiences. In this case, the parent company was the Associated British Picture Corporation (ABPC), who initially did not wish to become involved in the new broadcasting system, but were persuaded to do so by the Independent Television Authority. The Corporation agreed to take up the franchises to broadcast on Saturdays and Sundays to the Midlands and the North of England. The contract agreeing to do so was signed on 21 September 1955. The new ABC came on air in the Midlands on 18 February 1956. Soon afterwards, they were also up and running in the North, going on air there for the first time on 5 May 1956. ABC closed on 28 July 1968, being replaced by ATV in the Midlands, Granada Television in the North West, and Yorkshire Television in Yorkshire.

<sup>92</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 26 July 1956, Thomas to Dimmock.

<sup>93</sup> Any evidence of this offer has not been discovered, unfortunately.

<sup>94</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 24 August 1956, Howarth to Dimmock.



After this last effort, commercial television decided to give up, as stated by Dimmock in an internal memo: 'Howard Thomas told me to-day that commercial television will not make a further bid'<sup>95</sup>. Dimmock's feeling was that League's aim was to achieve £10,000, either exclusively from one side or collectively from both: 'I feel that this is far too extravagant a demand', he wrote. Thus he suggested the BBC not increase their offer, which was probably still £5,000 for exclusive rights and £2,000 for non-exclusive; or, instead, to withdraw the exclusive offer and to work out on the non-exclusive one, bearing in mind of the new problems arising from a dispute over film laboratories at the BBC<sup>96</sup>. But, on the other hand, 'it would be inadvisable to exclude football film altogether on Saturdays'<sup>97</sup>.

When Dimmock re-approached Howarth with the BBC's last offer, he underlined that, due to problems with film laboratory facilities, they had to withdraw altogether their exclusive offer, but would like to replace it with a firm bid for non-exclusive rights, being prepared to offer £2,500. The bid was then discussed at a meeting of some League officials (the President, the two Vice-Presidents and some senior members) on 30<sup>th</sup> August. Their counter-bid was a 'take it or leave it offer': £7,500 for the whole season exclusive for three matches, with 'no question of the League selling non-exclusive rights at a smaller figure'<sup>98</sup>. The BBC's answer was that they could only reaffirm that, unless and until there was a settlement of the laboratory strike, they were not in a position to

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<sup>95</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 25 August 1956, 'Football League film negotiations'.

<sup>96</sup> Due to a strike there was a possible lack of laboratory facilities for film processing.

<sup>97</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 - 25 August 1956, 'Football League film negotiations'.

<sup>98</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 30 August 1956, 'Football League film offer'.

commit them to an overall contract, proposing instead an alternative contract on an ad hoc basis (the offer was £150 per Saturday).

The League then moved back and, in spite of their initial refusal of an *ad hoc* basis, suggested to the BBC a different scale of figures: £200 per Saturday for excerpts of up to 3 matches of not more than 10 minutes duration, with a guaranteed minimum of 25 weeks; or, alternatively, £250 per Saturday for the same facilities on a Saturday to Saturday basis<sup>99</sup>. Dimmock replied that the Corporation, in view of the continuing uncertainty of the film processing laboratory situation, would like to adopt the second option (the 'Saturday to Saturday' one), reverting to the first in the case the dispute should be quickly settled. Eventually, on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1956, Freddie Howarth signed the 'Exclusive Contract' under the terms and conditions that had been agreed in the last two weeks<sup>100</sup>. And if it is also considered that just four days earlier the BBC had been granted exclusive live television, telerecording, and film rights for all matches directly controlled by the FA for the season 1956/57 (with the exception of the FA Cup Final, deemed to be non-exclusive) at a fee of £30,000, it can be said that, despite all the struggles with football authorities as well as competition with Independent Television, which suffered from lack of experience and

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<sup>99</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/448/1 – 10 September 1956, Howarth to Dimmock.

<sup>100</sup> Despite the BBC's goodwill, though, already in January 1957 *Sportsview* Editor Paul Fox had to communicate to Peter Dimmock that Saturday *Sports Specials* had to drop League Football when it could be replaced by telerecordings of Rugby Internationals, a decision that 'was not popular, according to many letters of protest we've received', and that 'also made the League unhappy'. But, according to Fox, 'it's impossible to produce Sports Special each week on £540. (...) I can see only one outlet and with your permission I would like to ask Hardaker unofficially whether they'd let us film one match for £150, two matches for £200 per Saturday. In this way we could at least save part of the fee, plus film cost.'. BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 29 January 1957, 'League Football'.



structured approach in negotiations, the BBC had managed to move a step forward in controlling the situation of televised football<sup>101</sup>.

### New ideas over football

In the meanwhile, in summer 1956 discussions were going on between the BBC and the FA on the contents of a series of new programmes on football. These, apart from the television coverage of main major events, would include 'wide opportunity in planning talks, discussions, debates, quizzes'. Proposed programmes ranged from 5-minute ones, like *The pace of the ball* on football technique or *New ideas in football* on tactics (with the feature of two managers), to half-an-hour ones on coaching sessions. The presentation of such programmes required

'1) An expert adviser who not only knows the subject but who knows how to present it in an interesting way.

2) A carefully prepared script (...).

3) A careful choice of personalities, lively and interesting, to present a varied approach to a given theme.

These functions would be responsibility of an F.A. department.'<sup>102</sup>.

The project did not come to fruition, but it shows how the BBC was prepared to diversify the televising of football, considering it not just as an OB item but also as a possible source of other kind of programmes that would both fit in the general schedule and be of interest to the viewers. From the FA's point of view, these programmes would raise the interest of the viewers towards football itself.

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<sup>101</sup> The FA/BBC agreement included a few Saturday evening experimental transmissions, and 'it did not, of course, please the League who were just beginning to flex their muscles and test their power to stop this', BBC WAC, T14/1447/6 – 18 September 1963, 'Television of Football: summary of negotiations 1956-63 with the Football League'.

<sup>102</sup> BBC WAC, T/14/1447/1 – July 1956, 'The Football Association'.

That both the FA and the BBC continued to be interested in mutual collaboration can be spotted when on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1957 BBC Television Sports Organiser Jack Oaten replied to Rous who had asked if the Corporation would be interested in televising the draw for the sixth round of the FA Cup:

‘We would be very interested indeed in a ‘live’ broadcast of the draw (...). There is no suitable sporting programme at this time but you are probably aware that on February 18<sup>th</sup> the 6-7 p.m. period ceases to be a close time for television<sup>103</sup>. We have a special topical programme in preparation for this period which should prove ideal for the inclusion of the Cup draw. Not only should it be possible to televise this ‘live’ at this time but additional publicity will be achieved because the draw can be repeated in the first news bulletin at 7.15 and in the late night news at 10.30.’<sup>104</sup>

These first years of competition were the ones in which the BBC OB Department tried to emphasise their superiority over commercial television as far as productions of football broadcasts were concerned. And those events that were televised by both channels were the perfect arena for getting the gap noticed.

Reginald Pound commented on *The Listener* in April 1956:

‘Hardly anything else that television does is more insinuatingly capable of traducing a critic that the outside broadcast from distant places. I enjoyed the televised football games on Saturday afternoon from Colombes in France and from Middlesbrough in Yorkshire, marvelling, as always, at the efficiency with which we were transported from one to the other. The pictures were first-rate in quality, an improvement which I believe is being widely reported by B.B.C. loyalists. In that matter nothing so good has as yet been seen in Channel 9.’<sup>105</sup>

And again, for the 1956 FA Cup Final:

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<sup>103</sup> It was the end of the so called ‘toddler’s truce’, which was a piece of British television in post-war years. It required that transmission be halted for an hour each weekday between 6.00pm and 7.00pm, meaning between the close of children’s TV and the evening schedule, in order that very young children, known as ‘toddlers’ in English slang, could be put to bed. The ‘truce’, considered an example of the BBC’s paternalism toward its audience, was abolished by the Parliament in October 1956 because it caused to commercial television a loss of much-needed revenue during the hours closedown.

<sup>104</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/2 – 22 January 1957, Oaten to Rous.

<sup>105</sup> *The Listener*, 19 April 1956 (476).



‘(...) The *ex cathedra* event of the week was last Saturday’s Cup Final at Wembley, and the Outside Broadcast Department ministered to the gaping congregations of its enormously augmented diocese (I.T.A. was with us) with its usual smooth resource.’<sup>106</sup>.

A particularly interesting note on the 1956 FA Cup Final is that, in consideration of the fact that the tie would be televised also by commercial television, late in March, after the semi-finals had been played, the BBC, in order to offer the viewers something that was ‘exclusively’ the BBC’s, convinced Birmingham City, which were to meet Manchester City in the forthcoming Cup Final, to sign an exclusive contract with the BBC. Under this contract

‘players and members of the training staff would not appear on programmes for anyone other than the B.B.C. between now and the date of the match. The contract was signed on behalf of all the others by L. Boyd, the Birmingham City captain.’<sup>107</sup>.

This new, more determined and aggressive approach was probably aimed at highlighting the BBC’s intention of affirming, even more heavily than in other fields, their intention to have football as the centrepiece of their scheduling despite competition.

### **Everything changed, nothing has changed**

In January 1957 a major transformation in the set-up of the League occurred: Alan Hardaker took over the position of Secretary, replacing of Freddie Howarth. Hardaker was not a newcomer, and before becoming Secretary he had been Howarth’s assistant, having been directly involved in negotiations with television. As Hardaker put it, ‘Fred Howarth knew little about the medium, and

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<sup>106</sup> *The Listener*, 10 May 1956 (612).

<sup>107</sup> *The Times*, 28 March 1956 (10f).

cared little about it, and he passed what responsibility he had in this connection on to me'<sup>108</sup>. Hardaker himself 'became increasingly aware that television was of vital importance, not only to the growth of the new medium, but also to the game itself'<sup>109</sup>.

After this change at the League, at the BBC it was wisely thought to take a little pause before re-starting negotiations, at least 'until we can be sure which way the new secretary really wants to go I feel we cannot take any chances', as Oaten wrote to Dimmock<sup>110</sup>. However, the League was about to have a meeting in March 1957, and Dimmock thought it was already an urgency to approach the League and the new Secretary, even if only a few days had gone by since the election of Hardaker: 'I am most anxious that we should take the initiative before the League meet in March'<sup>111</sup>. The desire of the BBC was to get a renewal of the 1956/57 film rights contract, but there was, of course, as every year, also the desire to achieve a breakthrough in the vexed question of live television coverage of League football. Meanwhile, in mid-March, the Corporation had already managed to convince the FA to arrange two matches on 2<sup>nd</sup> February and 3<sup>rd</sup> March to be played under floodlighting and televised<sup>112</sup>.

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<sup>108</sup> Hardaker, *Hardaker of the...*, 1977, p. 222.

<sup>109</sup> Haynes, 'A Pageant of Sound and Vision...', p. 222.

<sup>110</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 30 January 1957, Oaten to Dimmock.

<sup>111</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 4 February 1957, Dimmock to Oaten.

<sup>112</sup> An England-Luxembourg Youth friendly match (7-1), played at West Ham ('it is most encouraging to know that our Television outside broadcast of the England v. Luxembourg match at West Ham may have helped to spread interest in young people's football. If only the League officials would realise the same thing could very well apply if they would permit us to televise a controlled number of floodlit League matches each season!', BBC WAC, T14/1447/2 – 18 February 1957, Dimmock to Rous. The other game was a Scotland-England Under 23s, played at Ibrox Stadium, Glasgow. Martin Armstrong, independent contributor commenting on BBC programmes for *The Listener*, did not seem to appreciate the quality of pictures: 'In Scotland v. England Under 23s (soccer) last week fog encroached on the floodlighting in Ibrox Stadium,



After these two experimental evening broadcasts, the BBC sought to make the League clubs aware that ‘from the experience gained through these matches we have come to feel that there is a place for regular ‘live’ television of League soccer on Saturday evenings’<sup>113</sup>.

The first plan arranged by the OB department was to offer a bid for a joint FA-League contract to get exclusive rights to televise live the second half of a League match from the First Division or an FA Cup match on each Saturday evening of the next season at a fee of £3,000 per game. This would guarantee the League about 30 Saturday matches, assuring a total income of £90,000, plus the film contract fee<sup>114</sup>. But this plan did not completely satisfy some members of the department, like Jack Oaten, who thought that ‘we are not helping ourselves by suggesting a joint contract with the F.A. and the League. The two bodies are hardly on speaking terms’. Besides, Oaten observed how this new offer was in open contrast with their repeated statements of the previous summer that they believed football every Saturday night to be bad programming and not in the interests of the sport: ‘we must explain this one, but I don’t know what the explanation is’<sup>115</sup>. Finally, he noted that the FA would not be happy with the proposal, given that clubs usually refused to play under floodlighting when

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Glasgow, to an extent that now and then reduced television to something little more than mere sound broadcasting. ’, *The Listener*, 7 March 1957 (396).

<sup>113</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 12 March, ‘Draft letter for chairmen of all Football League Clubs’.

<sup>114</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 13 March 1957, ‘First draft’.

<sup>115</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 12 March 1957, ‘Letter to Football League’.

anything big was at stake; which meant in the later rounds, which, incidentally were the most interesting ones involving the big clubs<sup>116</sup>.

In light of these observations, and especially considering that ‘the key to success in achieving ‘live’ television of League Football is still, as it was last year, compensation’ and that ‘basically big money talks and that was why our offers last year received such scant attention’<sup>117</sup>, Oaten suggested a different scheme. This new plan consisted of offering £75,000 to the League (plus compensation to the clubs up to a total of £100,000) for one League match on each of the 35 Saturdays on the late kick-off principle (6.30pm); then they would try to get a separate contract with the FA including a few FA Cup matches on the late kick-off principle too, for a total expenditure on football in the region of £130,000. Oaten was also quite confident of being able to obtain exclusivity on the FA contract (‘we have F.A. goodwill’<sup>118</sup>), but this of course gave Independent Television the advantage of being better off in their bid to the League.

After a couple of months, the OB department developed the final scheme, and prepared a draft letter, written and re-written by Peter Dimmock, in which he expressed to Hardaker the BBC’s offer for both exclusive film and live television rights. As far as film rights were concerned, the BBC, having eventually solved the film laboratory processing dispute, wished to revert to the 1955/56 contract: £5,000 for filming up to three matches every Saturday. Regarding the question of

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<sup>116</sup> Another objection to floodlighting for the advanced stages of the FA Cup was explained by Rous to Dimmock: Dear Mr Dimmock, (...) the Challenge Cup Committee would not agree to your request to play the Semi-Final Ties under floodlight this year. (...) It would mean some 50,000 to 60,000 supporters at each match would be faced with a long journey to their homes quite late in the evening.’, BBC WAC, T14/1447/2 – 5 March 1957, Rous to Dimmock.

<sup>117</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 28 March 1957, ‘Football League’.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.



live television, Dimmock would suggest three different schemes, pinpointing that while the Corporation

‘still feel that any approach to ‘live’ television of League soccer should be made with caution, and with due thought for the good of the game, two experiments with ‘live’ television of Saturday evening games which the BBC carried out early this year suggest that this is popular with viewers and threatens no harm to the League matches.’<sup>119</sup>.

In the first scheme the BBC would broadcast live between ten and fifteen League matches, equally distributed between the beginning and the end of the season, to be played in midweek (Tuesday or Wednesday) under floodlights. On this basis the BBC would pay the League £2,000 per match, plus the £5,000 for film rights. The second scheme was more aggressive, and consisted of an offer of £100,000 for live TV broadcasting of the second half of one match every Saturday of the season with a late kick-off time (6.30pm). The third scheme, finally, was the softer one and presented an offer of £2,000 per match for live television of the second half of a limited number of matches to be played on a selected number of Saturday afternoons, keeping both the match and the afternoon chosen completely unannounced, as happened for sound broadcasting. In such a way the BBC was trying to test the full range of possibilities and to find out what kind of attitude the new Secretary would display in the negotiation.

The letter with the three different schemes never made its way to the League headquarters, though. A final draft eventually was sent to the League, and the three possible schemes for live television were reduced by Dimmock to a proposal that adhered to scheme 1, with a limited experiment of ‘live’ television of ten to fifteen League games to be played under floodlights, not mentioning whether on

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<sup>119</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 14 May 1957, ‘Draft letter to Football League’.

Saturday or in midweek<sup>120</sup>. Furthermore, 'in view of the fact that we have not got the money and further that we may go to D.G. on a larger picture anyway, over and above the football, we should not, therefore, put forward any offer to the League at the moment'<sup>121</sup>; thus, also in consideration of the fear that Hardaker would do a little insider trading, expecting to know the BBC's bid in financial terms to communicate them to commercial television in order to push them to make a higher offer<sup>122</sup>, Dimmock decided not to mention any financial terms to the League yet.

Initial feedback by Hardaker on the offer by the BBC was anything but positive. On the matter of live television he wrote to Oaten that his 'own personal opinion is now that the Clubs will have nothing to do with live television at any price, but I must stress that is merely my own opinion', while a little more space was left open regarding film rights:

'So far as the film rights are concerned, I think they (*the clubs*) may be disposed to accept your offer, but I think there might be a little bit of negotiation on the question of exclusive rights.'<sup>123</sup>.

The League AGM was about to be held early in June, and the final bid by the BBC was, as already stated in the letter of the 20<sup>th</sup> May and reaffirmed subsequently on the 29<sup>th</sup>, on the same basis: £5,000 for exclusive film rights and £30,000 for 15 midweek floodlit games, divided between the beginning and the

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<sup>120</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 20 May 1957, Dimmock to Hardaker. As it will specified more clearly in another letter dated 29<sup>th</sup> May, the proposal was for midweek games. See BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 29 May 1957, Dimmock to Hardaker.

<sup>121</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 21 May 1957, 'Football League'.

<sup>122</sup> It is very instructive to read what, almost two months earlier, Jack Oaten thought of Hardaker in talking of the fact that ITV had not made an offer for live television yet: 'I believe Hardaker expects them to do so and is not above actively encouraging them', BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 28 March 1957, 'Football League'.

<sup>123</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 23 May 1957, Hardaker to Oaten.



end of the season. The bid was hopeless: ATV had already made an overall offer 'variously reported as "up to £150,000" but the true details have not been allowed to leak out'<sup>124</sup>.

Notwithstanding the fact that this huge increase made ATV quite confident as to their eventual success, at the meeting the clubs turned down any question of live television coverage of League football, at least for 1957/58. The only positive decision taken in favour of television was a delay of the consideration of the film offer in a meeting to be held at Brighton on 2<sup>nd</sup> July. On this occasion things seemed to be working smoothly for the BBC:

'In talks with Hardaker he has told me that the only question likely to be discussed is whether the League do sell 'exclusive' rights. This, in any case, is dependent on whether ITA have made any offers for film and Hardaker indicated pretty conclusively that so far they have not done so. I feel we can look forward with some confidence to the film offer being accepted. Hardaker volunteered to telephone me the result from Brighton.'<sup>125</sup>.

The result of the meeting was that the BBC's £5,000 bid was accepted, and the OB department could rejoice in affirming that 'the BBC would again be the only Television service permitted to show programme film of the same days League matches'<sup>126</sup>. This represented, of course, a major blow for commercial television, because Independent Television News (ITN)<sup>127</sup> had been talking about the possibility of running a Saturday late night sports programme in competition with *Sports Special*, the BBC programme that showed the film excerpts, but under the BBC/League agreement ITN would be able to use excerpts of football matches up

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<sup>124</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 5 June 1957, Oaten to Dimmock.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 11 July 1957, 'Football League Film Contract 1957-58'.

<sup>127</sup> Independent Television News (ITN), founded in 1955, was and still is the main supplier of news broadcasts to ITV. It was formed as a consortium of the initial franchise holders.

to two minutes only and placed in a regularly scheduled news programme, 'and I think that our agreement will successfully block any suggestion of a programme similar to "Sports Special"', Dimmock affirmed<sup>128</sup>. The 1957/58 contract was eventually signed on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1957. Another success had been scored by the BBC, but live television was still a chimera.

### 'We play, you pay!'

At the League AGM held in Brighton another contentious issue was finally cleared: the matter of extra payment to players when televised. This was a longstanding issue: already in January 1948 the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA), intervening in the discussions between the football authorities and the BBC, had raised the matter 'whether, and on what terms, Soccer games should be televised' and whether they should be 'entitled to payment when there are running commentaries on matches'<sup>129</sup>. The objection had been stimulated by the quarrel that had arisen from the demand of musicians for 'substantial' payment when their orchestral performances were broadcast: if they were paid to play to a certain audience, and if they had, through broadcasting, to play to millions instead of hundreds, they should be paid at least a reasonable sum per performance. The same kind of arguments was then adopted by football players.

The matter, though, was not ironed out at least until 1954, when Jimmy Guthrie, Secretary of the PFA, put the point of 'TV fees' to the attention of the

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<sup>128</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 11 July 1957, 'Football League Film Contract 1957-58'.

<sup>129</sup> *The Sporting Life – Weekly Edition*, 24 January 1948. In BBC WAC, R30/915/4.



League Management Committee, as testified by this letter that Guthrie wrote to the BBC:

‘They (*the players*) have advised the Management Committee of the Union that they are opposed to present arrangements made in respect of matches appearing on television and they have instructed the Committee to take immediate steps to open negotiations for the purpose of establishing the payment of fees in respect of matches which are televised.

We have been advised by the Variety Artists Federation, the British Musicians Union and the British Actors’ Equity Association that they have established the payment of fees in respect of their Members appearing on television and it is for the purpose of bringing our members into line with other entertainers that we seek the opportunity of an early meeting.’<sup>130</sup>

On this matter, the view of the BBC was that ‘the question of fees must be settled by the players with their employers’<sup>131</sup>. But the question, despite the attempt made by Guthrie to have a settlement already at the Management Committee AGM in 1956, was not to be discussed by the League until 1957. Eventually, at the 1957 meeting, after Guthrie had once again raised the vexed question ‘to consider fees for players taking part in televised games or alternatively a percentage of the fee for Accident or Benevolent purposes’<sup>132</sup>, the matter was discussed and settled.

In front of a ‘quite confident’ Guthrie, 70% voted in favour of an individual fee and the remainder for a percentage to a Union Fund; more or less at the same time another agreement on TV fees for games in which the FA were responsible had been reached: Cup Final £5 per player; Internationals £5 per player; ‘B’, Under 23 £3 per player; others £1 per player<sup>133</sup>. A minimum result had been

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<sup>130</sup> BBC WAC, T14/95/1 – November 1954, Guthrie to the BBC.

<sup>131</sup> *The Times*, 4 January 1956 (4f).

<sup>132</sup> Guthrie, Jimmy, *Soccer Rebel. The Evolution of the Professional Footballer*, Newton Abbott: 1976, p. 85.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86. As far as TV fees for League matches there is no evidence of the fees agreed for, but they must have not been very much different from the ones paid for by the FA.

obtained, and even if it was not a huge sum, at least it was something. It was something that represented the basis for future negotiations. But, once again, 'the football authorities (...) had maintained their hegemonic position within the governance of the game and its finances', as Haynes writes<sup>134</sup>.

The question of live television was the object of discussion also of a meeting requested by the Scottish and Irish FAs and Leagues held in the FA's Council Chamber late in November 1957. The meeting, which was attended by representatives of all the four British FAs and Leagues, had been called in order to decide the fixtures of football matches to be televised for next season, paying 'special regard to avoiding interference with the attendances at other matches throughout Britain'<sup>135</sup>. Peter Dimmock, who had been invited to attend the meeting along with Graydon of ITV, had a different idea of the meeting<sup>136</sup>. His idea was that the meeting had been called 'in an attempt to try and ban altogether live Television of Association Football'<sup>137</sup>.

Chairman of the meeting was Arthur Drewry. The main point of discussion was blanketing. Both Dimmock and Graydon tried to persuade football officials that blanketing was likely to be a difficult proposition for several years yet, and that they would rather have national network coverage. But this attempt 'was rather like Canute trying to keep the tide back', as reported by Dimmock<sup>138</sup>. At

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<sup>134</sup> Haynes, 'A Pageant of Sound...', p. 220.

<sup>135</sup> *The Times*, 27 November 1957 (6g).

<sup>136</sup> Actually, immediately after the beginning of the meeting the two television officials, accompanied by Jack Oaten and the England Team Manager Walter Winterbottom, were asked to withdraw, seconding a request by the Secretaries of the Scottish and Irish Leagues. They were then allowed to rejoin the meeting after one hour. See BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 3 December 1957, 'Meeting with the Football Associations of England, Ireland...'.  
<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.



this point of the meeting Dimmock suggested that the meeting might consider making a certain number of specific evenings each season available for live television, and, quite unexpectedly, the plan was generally accepted and a further meeting was planned at the end of January to discuss this scheme.

At the end of the meeting, Dimmock highlighted two main points. First of all the question of competition: the first thing to be settled was whether these 'limited dates' would remain competitive between the BBC and ITV or whether a gentleman's agreement between the two services would be possible. Dimmock's thought was that this second resolution 'would soon become very evident to the Clubs concerned and merely tend to make them feel that we were trying to take advantage of the situation'<sup>139</sup>. The second interesting element pinpointed by the head of the OB department was that the presence of Graydon was the first concrete example of the new ITV policy of appointing one expert for each sphere of sport and public events to negotiate for all the ITV Companies: 'we must watch this very carefully indeed'<sup>140</sup>.

At the end of the day it had not been such a disastrous meeting as feared initially, and Dimmock's overall impression was that if they continued to 'try and eradicate the present stigma whereby it is being said that live television of any kind can only do harm to soccer as a whole', they might make the football

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. Yet in summer 1960 this process had not been completely carried out, though, as Keith Rogers, Chairman of the ITV Network Sports Committee, wrote to Jack Oaten: 'I.T.V. will be strengthening the Sports Committee (...) there will be a new Chairman who will be selected from the Main Network Committee being a Director of one of the Companies. This will I hope enable the Sports Committee to take very much more prompt and definite action without having to refer back, as it does at the moment, to a superior Committee.', BBC WAC, T14/1447/4 – 15 June 1960, Rogers to Oaten.

authorities aware that ‘controlled television can do nothing but good for the game in addition to providing quite a worthwhile amount of additional income’<sup>141</sup>.

The agreement would be confirmed in August 1958, and this time, finally, the BBC managed to get a long-term agreement:

‘The B.B.C. announced yesterday that it has signed an agreement with the Football League for the exclusive filming rights of Saturday League matches. The agreement is for three years and permits the B.B.C. to film three League matches each Saturday. Not more than 10 minutes of film of any one match will be broadcast.’<sup>142</sup>.

### **TV football goes big-time**

In autumn 1957, a couple of football games were televised by the BBC: the second half of England-France at Wembley and Sheffield Wednesday-Juventus. Both the games did nothing but reinforce the Corporation’s achievements in terms of technical production and commentary, as testified by Armstrong on *The Listener*:

I watched all the B.B.C. allowed me last week of England v. France on Wednesday and Sheffield Wednesday v. Juventus, the Italian League leaders, on Thursday. (...). The camera work seems, in my modest opinion, to have improved enormously in the last year, in fact the Chivers’ presentation at Wembley and Ray Lakeland’s at Hillsborough were as good as they could be, and the commentary – by Kenneth Wolstenholme and Walley Barnes at Wembley and the former alone at Hillsborough – was all that the most exacting viewer could wish.

Both in football and boxing the viewer has an immense advantage over the spectator on the spot. In football the spectator’s eye has to follow the rapidly receding action, whereas television obligingly brings the action close up to the viewer’s eye (...)’<sup>143</sup>.

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<sup>141</sup> BBC WAC, T14/448/2 – 3 December 1957, ‘Meeting with the Football Associations of England, Ireland...’.

<sup>142</sup> *The Times*, 28 August 1958 (4e). Unfortunately the financial terms of this agreement have not been discovered.

<sup>143</sup> *The Listener*, 5 December 1957 (956).



The closing lines of the above reported article seem to underline how finally television was shifting viewers' perceptions of the medium itself not only just as a mere instrument of witnessing the events in question, but also as a medium that could enhance the quality of that experience, being so even better than the actual attending.

The two matches above mentioned were only part of the entire list of football games that were televised by the BBC in 1957/58<sup>144</sup>. This list, which included 20 matches, was quite a step forward with regard to the restricted list of previous years. There were FA Cup ties; there were major internationals involving the England XI as well as other major European teams such as Germany or Italy; there were minor international games (under 23s, youth or schoolboys); there were European Cup ties involving British Clubs; there was no League football, of course.

Regarding the 1958 FA Cup Final, an interesting novelty featured the televising for the first time of filmed interviews from the dressing rooms. These were carried by the BBC only, after both finalist clubs had been contracted on an exclusive basis (as had already happened in 1956 with Birmingham City). The interviews were broadcast in a late night sports programme on the very same Saturday of the final. This interesting new feature caused, protests from

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<sup>144</sup> The complete list was as follows: 16/10/57: England-Rumania under 23s; 29/10/57: West Bromwich Albion-Moscow; 6/11/57: England-Ireland; 13/11/57: England-Belgium youth; 27/11/57: England-France; 27/11/57: Glasgow Rangers-Milano; 28/11/57: Sheffield Wednesday-Juventus; 15/1/58: N. Ireland-Italy; 15/1/58: England-Scotland under 23s; 1/3/58: England-Scotland youth; 4/3/58: England-Austria youth; 12/3/58: England-Germany youth; 19/3/58: Germany-Spain; 23/3/58: Austria-Italy; 26/3/58: Manchester United-Fulham (FA Cup Semi-final replay); 21/4/58: Amateur Cup Final; 19/4/58: Scotland-England; 26/4/58: England-Scotland schoolboys; 3/5/58: FA Cup Final; 7/5/58: England-Portugal. See: BBC WAC, T14/1447/2 – Spring 1958, 'Football Televised 'Live' during the 1957-58 Season'.

commercial television for having been cut out of this ‘bonus’, as testified in a letter sent by Graydon of Granada Television<sup>145</sup> to Rous. In the letter the incident was described as very ‘displeasing’, and Graydon underlined to Rous that the provision of different broadcast facilities to the two TV contractors could lead general opinion to think that preference was being given to the BBC:

‘(...) you have always emphasised, however, that equal facilities must be shared by both sides, and a little incident such as this, you will agree, may give some people a false impression.’<sup>146</sup>.

Rous was consequently obliged to ask Dimmock for the reason for this misbehaviour by the BBC, and Dimmock’s reply was quite clear, at least according to the BBC’s point of view:

‘Personally I was always against any live television from dressing rooms, but in view of our regular late night Saturday sports programme it did seem reasonable to ask that we should meet the players with film cameras thirty minutes after the end of the match rather than arrange some other meeting point away from the stadium. (...). In deciding to operate on a side by side basis with us for the Cup Final, Commercial Television may have been at a disadvantage, but I really don’t think that there is any justification for their particular complaint. I think that they are confusing the question of live television and film facilities. We have all along agreed that it would be quite unreasonable to ask for live camera facilities in the dressing room as distinct from any question of filmed interviews.’<sup>147</sup>.

The incident showed how aggressive the BBC’s attitude was and, on the other hand, how naïve was ITV’s. At the same time, it launched new possibilities in terms of television programming on football.

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<sup>145</sup> Granada Television was the ITV contractor for the “North of England” weekday franchise from 1954 (started broadcasting on May 3, 1956) until 1968, and for the “Northwest England” all-week franchise since 1968. Granada is the only one of the original four ITV franchisees from 1954 which survived as a franchise holder into the twenty-first century.

<sup>146</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/2 – 7 May 1958, Graydon to Rous.

<sup>147</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/2 – 23 May 1958, Dimmock to Rous.



## Setting a cartel

Throughout the first half of 1958 three meetings of a 'Joint Standing Committee of The Football Association and Football League' were held (on 28<sup>th</sup> March, on 11<sup>th</sup> April, and on 3<sup>rd</sup> July), but no final decision was taken on the matter of live television. Eventually, a meeting was held at the FA headquarters at Lancaster Gate, London, on 15<sup>th</sup> August, with representatives of the FA, the League, the BBC and ITA<sup>148</sup>. At this meeting a series of important decisions was taken. First of all, a list of the matches to be televised for the 1958-59 season was approved, all of them being under the FA's jurisdiction<sup>149</sup>. Another important decision was that 'Football League matches would not be televised, nor matches which were likely to affect adversely other games on the same date'<sup>150</sup>. A third point that was elaborated, probably the most important one, was the decision to form a 'Television Sub-Committee of The Football Association and Football League Joint Committee' that would meet periodically in order to select the matches to be televised and to negotiate with TV authorities 'for the most suitable days and dates and to arrange the financial terms'<sup>151</sup>. The object of the Sub-Committee would also be the prevention of competition between ITV and BBC, which caused immense trouble to the League, 'whose major clubs were

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<sup>148</sup> There were present: Denis Follows, Stanley Rous and S.L. Whitehorn of the FA; Alan Hardaker of the Football League; Peter Dimmock and Jack Oaten of the BBC; H. Jamieson, J. Graydon and J. Wilson of ITA.

<sup>149</sup> England-Czechoslovakia Under 23 (15/10/58); England-USSR (22/11/58); England-Wales (26/11/58); Scotland-England Under 23 (21/01/59 or 04/02/59); FA Amateur Cup Final (18/04/58); FA Cup Final (02/05/59); England-Italy (06/05/59). There was a game under League's jurisdiction, too: Football League-Irish League (12/11/58).

<sup>150</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1448/1 – 15 August 1958, 'Minutes of a meeting'.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

getting out of hand in their fights among each other for big fees'<sup>152</sup>. The corollary decision to the setting up of the TV Sub-Committee was to arrange a list of midweek floodlit friendly matches during the period October-April<sup>153</sup>, with a scale of fees to be fixed depending on the class of the game.

This meeting marked a fundamental moment within the context of the overall negotiations between football and television authorities. If on the one hand there was the confirmation of the fact that, still, live television of League football was considered as something to be banned at any cost, on the other hand there was awareness that the matter of televising football was a delicate question to be faced with the utmost attention. Therefore the decision to set up an FA/League joint committee would represent a decisive one in order to settle any future development in this field.

The first effect of the meeting was that the BBC and Independent Television would have to form a cartel to negotiate with the newly set Sub-Committee. The cartel was then set, in consideration of the fact that any live football would be the FA's, which meant 'national interest' football, added to the awareness that, given the difficulties experienced with football authorities, 'the only hope of some sensible solution seems to be a joint approach from television as a whole'<sup>154</sup>. The cartel was not the solution dreamt of by the BBC OB department, because it did 'of course rule out any question of overall exclusivity in football by any one

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<sup>152</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/6 – 18 September 1963, 'Television of Football: summary of negotiations 1956-63 with the Football League'.

<sup>153</sup> To be played on Tuesdays or Thursdays, 'the days on which other games are least likely to be affected', BBC WAC, T14/1448/1 – 15 August 1958, 'Minutes of a meeting'.

<sup>154</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/2 – 28 August 1958, Dimmock to Thomas.



television organisation'; but, on the other hand, it 'may have the advantage of reducing fees to a sensible basis'<sup>155</sup>.

The first time the BBC/ITV cartel started joint negotiations with the football authorities was on the occasion of the bid for the 1958/59 football season scale of fees. The offer concerned a series of scheduled matches along with proposals for some further one-off games, such as European Cup games, FA Cup Ties and replays, midweek Football League games, Inter-League matches and Schoolboy internationals. The fees ranged from £750 for the second half of an international or for the whole of a midweek afternoon Under 23 international or Cup reply, to £10,000 for the whole of the FA Cup Final<sup>156</sup>.

It is interesting to note that for some of the matches in the list an exclusivity clause would remain (with a rota basis between the BBC and ITV), while for some others (FA Cup Final, FA Amateur Cup Final, a Schoolboys International,

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid. The cartel, though, did not necessarily mean that there were no reasons for troubles and misunderstandings between the two television services, as testified by the letter that OB Sports Organiser Jack Oaten sent to Hardaker: 'We are getting somewhat concerned at the amount of Sunday football which the ITA Programme Contractors are now putting on the air and our programme controllers are beginning to ask us what are our recommendations on this situation for the New Year.', BBC WAC, T14/1448/1 – 17 December 1958, Oaten to Hardaker. And again, quite interesting is the reading of the letter from Denis Morris, Head of BBC Midland Regional Programmes, to Stephen McCormack, Programme Controller of Anglia Television Ltd., about the contravention of the BBC/FA contract by Anglia Television: 'It seems that you must be unaware of the form of Contract which the BBC has signed for a number of seasons with the Football Association, as you have, I understand, contravened one of its clauses in your transmissions. This allows for a film camera to be operated for the benefit of all other Television News organisations permitting them or their subscribers to show up to two minutes of film in any one scheduled television news programme (and not more than two minutes in any one day), provided that the showing of such film is confined to regularly scheduled news programmes. My information is that after the Reading/Norwich F.A. Cup replay you showed film of this type in programmes which are not news programmes, that you showed it twice in one day, that you showed it the day after the game in question, and – on one occasion – no less than three days later. You will appreciate that the Corporation paid a very considerable sum of money to obtain certain rights from the Football Association and they do not wish them either to be waived or overlooked. I shall be grateful if you will look into this and give me an assurance that you will not contravene this agreement again.', BBC WAC, T14/1448/1 – 14 December 1959, Morris to McCormack.

<sup>156</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/1447/2 – 22 September 1958, Oaten to Rous.

and the England-Russia match) there would be a non-exclusive basis. This choice was made in order not to overlap the broadcasting of the same event on both television services contemporaneously, while some of them were considered of 'national interest' and therefore would be appreciated by the public even when on both channels. The rota also enabled the BBC and ITV to keep fees down at a time 'when competition was becoming ruinous'; it did, though, give the League, which was 'gradually assuming more and more power', the opportunity to reduce the amount of televised football<sup>157</sup>. The reply by the Sub-Committee came back quite rapidly, and, as expected by the BBC and ITV, showed some clear divergence from the proposed scale of fees, the main one being represented by the request of £15,000 for the FA Cup Final<sup>158</sup>.

A further proposal came from the BBC/ITV cartel, with some notes on the Sub-Committee's counter-proposal. The main disagreements were about the request for any international played in the afternoon (£1,000 and £1,500 for 2<sup>nd</sup> half or the whole of the match against a proposal of £750 and £1,000 respectively: 'Disagree. Stay at £750 and £1,000'), the fee asked for the first round of the European Cup (£2,000 instead of £1,000: 'No. We have never yet obtained a 1<sup>st</sup> round match & anyway it is not worth it'), and, most of all, for the FA Cup Final, with the BBC and ITV sticking to their initial offer of £10,000 instead of the requested £15,000: 'No. As before £5,000 each or £10,000 if only one party

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<sup>157</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/6 – 18 September 1963, 'Television of Football: summary of negotiations 1956-63 with the Football League'.

<sup>158</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/1447/2 – October 1958, 'Television – Proposed scale of fees for 'live' television of football during season 1958/1959'.



televises’<sup>159</sup>. Eventually the Sub-Committee agreed with the BBC/ITV’s offer, and a fee of £10,000 was accepted.

### The quiet before the storm

Film highlights of League games on the BBC on Saturday night, after a three years filming contract starting from season 1959-60 (the first long-term contract ever) at a fee of £7,500 had been signed. There were FA Cup ties live on some Saturday evenings on the BBC; there were live TV broadcasts of some internationals and the final stages of cup competitions either on the BBC or Independent Television; and there were, of course and as usual, complaints by the League about TV broadcasting of sports, even if other than football, on Saturday afternoons:

‘The Football League, worried about the effect on attendances by Saturday afternoon television of sport, may soon approach other sporting organizations to prevent such television. (...) The League chairman, Mr. J. Richards, said after the meeting that there had been a general feeling against televising of matches on Saturday afternoon and it might be that an approach would be made to all other sporting organizations to prevent it. (...) They had evidence that smaller clubs outside the League were also suffering.’<sup>160</sup>.

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<sup>159</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/2 – 9 October 1958, ‘Scale of fees for ‘live’ television of football during season 1958-1959’.

<sup>160</sup> *The Times*, 10 March 1959 (15b). But this blatant attitude by the League was not universally accepted by readers of *The Times*, as the following letter to the Editor, sent just a few days after, testifies: ‘Sir, - The newspapers inform me that important persons in the Association football world presume to be incensed because other sport sports are to be seen on television on Saturday afternoons, (...). Who and what, Sir, do these persons think they are? And what conceivable right have they to attempt to dragoon me into watching the sport which they represent by depriving me of the opportunity of seeing some quite different sport on television or anywhere else? (...) I would be grateful if you would allow me, through your columns, to say publicly that: (a) if these “approaches” are successful, I undertake never again to enter the grounds of a professional Association football club; (b) if there is reason to believe that these “approaches” have been successful with the connivance of the Rugby football authorities, the Rugby football club which at present receives my subscription will do so no longer. Small loss in either case? No doubt, but there may be many who feel as I do, and who may be inclined to act in the same way. (...) Denis Browne, Dean of the Faculty of Law, The University of Liverpool.’, *The Times*, 14 March 1959 (7d).

It was just a reminder of the League's attitude in a period of apparent calm.

Fears of other sports broadcasting on the same day of League matches were again repeated in December 1959, after the news that the BBC would show the Grand National from Aintree on March 26:

'Bristol Rovers – fearing a disastrous drop in gates – have led the rush of clubs asking for permission to postpone their games scheduled for Grand National Saturday. (...) The League Management Committee at their January meeting will consider the suggestions that ALL Soccer should be cut on March 26 –Grand National day. (...) Bristol Rovers, whose manager, Bert Tann, says: "Our home gate will be disastrously affected by the National" (...)'<sup>161</sup>.

In summer 1959 a new situation arose. Alan Hardaker approached Paul Fox, Editor of *Sportsview*, to point him out that there was a chance of the League permitting the broadcasting of live football for the last ten or fifteen minutes of a League match on all Saturdays. Fox wrote to Dimmock that Hardaker felt that 'live football for ten minutes is a possibility and he thinks that he could persuade the Chairmen to accept it', and that his view was that 'opposition to live football is no longer so strong, especially now that a couple of aged Management Committee members have watched "Grandstand"'<sup>162</sup>. It was an important as much as unexpected possibility that the BBC felt they should not let slip out of their hands. Hardaker had not approached only the BBC, though, having contacted also Gerry Loftus of Granada Television. It was Loftus himself who wrote to Oaten to report the offer he had received from Hardaker in late August:

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<sup>161</sup> *Daily Mail*, 14 December 1959, in BBC WAC, T14/1447/3. It is also very instructive to note how the fee paid by the BBC for the televising of the Grand National, £15,000 would result in the League and the FA asking for higher fees: 'The League-FA Television committee having just agreed a B.B.C. fee of £10,000 for next May's Cup Final – will ask: "If nine minutes' racing is worth £15,000 – then what is the PROPER price for 90 minutes' football?', *ibid*.

<sup>162</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1448/1 – 20 August 1959, 'Live Football'.



‘His suggestion is that we should put in another offer solely for the last 20 minutes (“at a reasonable price”) or suggest one idea of “taping” a match for transmission after 6 o’clock. We are not in any way interested in the “taping” idea but there is interest in the last 20 minutes. You will recall that when we put in our recent bid, we covered various time segments with the hope of getting half a match. I suggest we make another joint approach solely trying to get the last 20 minutes of a game and try a reduced offer of £500.’<sup>163</sup>.

But the proposal suddenly vanished when Hardaker communicated to Dimmock that ‘the Management Committee will not agree to your showing an experimental ten minutes of a Football League match live in your Grandstand programme’<sup>164</sup>.

The BBC, though, did not give up, and tried to raise the possibility of being permitted at least a news film flash of about 90 seconds from a Saturday League match at the end of *Grandstand* at about 4.55pm, ‘after all League matches have finished’, and just before giving the classified football results. The showing of the film news ‘would provide – Dimmock writes to Hardaker – a much greater impact to this football section’<sup>165</sup>. It took more than one month to get a reply from the League: ‘the Management Committee (...) refused your request for permission to show a 90 seconds [*sic*] film flash of a League match in your “Grandstand” programme’<sup>166</sup>.

The thing, however, that can be learnt from this episode is that there was probably an internal feud within the League among those who thought that live television would bring good revenue (and Hardaker was one of those), and those who were still fiercely opposed to it. The time had not come yet for the first party

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<sup>163</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1448/1 – 25 August 1959, Loftus to Oaten.

<sup>164</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1448/1 – 15 September 1959, Hardaker to Dimmock.

<sup>165</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1448/1 – 20 October 1959, Dimmock to Hardaker.

<sup>166</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1448/1 – 24 November 1959, Hardaker to Dimmock.

to gain a majority in the League. But a new, tempting offer was about to come to change things.

### 'We got it... We lost it!'

On 1<sup>st</sup> August 1960 all the press reported the following news:

'The commercial television companies are expected to sign an agreement on Thursday with the Football League for rights to televise floodlit League matches on Friday and Saturday evenings in the coming season. The fee is reported to be "in excess of £142,000".

An ABC Television official, whose company acted as the main negotiators, said that the agreement had not yet been signed because the member clubs had not ratified it and the contracting companies were still waiting in the case the B.B.C. made a counter-proposal.'<sup>167</sup>

The cartel had been broken, and the BBC seemed to be very surprised more by the substance of the proposed bid rather than by the negotiation itself:

'A B.B.C. official said yesterday that they had known for some time that the league were to negotiate with the television organizations, and that the corporation had made several proposals in writing. "But the league have now told us that they prefer to negotiate with Independent Television because of being able to incorporate an advertising campaign in the deal, which they tell us will probably be completed this week". (...). He added that the reported price "seems absurd for the type of matches because it will merely increase the cost of all television football sports fees".'<sup>168</sup>

The BBC people were very upset with ITV for having broken the gentleman's agreement that had characterised negotiations in the last months, and with the League itself for having acted out of the FA/League Television Sub-Committee:

'The negotiations have been carried on quite separately from the joint Football Association and Football League television sub-committee, at which all aspects of British football are represented. This seems strange

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<sup>167</sup> *The Times*, 1 August 1960 (6g).

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*



since the football administrators themselves set up this committee to control the amount of football televised.’<sup>169</sup>.

Furthermore, in a press statement issued by the BBC on 4<sup>th</sup> August, it was pinpointed how ‘the T.V. Sub-Committee appointed by The Football Association and Football League has not at any time been informed of the negotiations between I.T.V. and The Football League’<sup>170</sup>.

The BBC tried to immediately react to the new situation, and even if a deal between the League and ITV was still to be signed, it was generally thought that an agreement would be very likely. Therefore, it was considered to move backward (from 10pm to 7pm) the placing of the Saturday evening programme of League football highlights. In such a way the programme would precede the kick-off of the ITV football match, due at 7.30pm<sup>171</sup>: ‘only a timing at around 7 o’clock can combat the attraction of ITA live football’, Fox wrote to Dimmock as early as on 1<sup>st</sup> August<sup>172</sup>. This scheduling change was clearly a deliberate and ‘preventive’ spoiling tactic aimed at the ITV programming, in order to force the audience to choose between live football of one match only on commercial television and goals and highlights of three matches on the BBC shown at about the same time.

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/4 – 4 August 1960, ‘Press Statement’.

<sup>171</sup> The formal request was made to Hardaker on 10<sup>th</sup> August and to Rous only on 31<sup>st</sup> August: ‘We wrote to the Secretary of the Football League about this (...) and asked whether we would meet them to discuss (...) either the possibility of mutually terminating our recording agreement with the Football League or bringing forward the excerpts until just after twenty-minutes-to-five. (...) Although the League have not formally replied to our letter, Mr. Hardaker has verbally informed us that there is no objection to our showing excerpts at any time after 4.40p.m. and that the Football League have never felt that any showing once matches are over would do any harm.’, BBC WAC, T14/1447/4 – 31 August 1960, Dimmock to Rous.

<sup>172</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/4 – 1 August 1960, ‘Football on BBC Television’.

Secondly, it was thought to reinforce the bond with the FA by making an ‘all-out effort’ to get live rights of FA Cup matches, ‘since they are the major attraction in football from January onwards’<sup>173</sup>. Thirdly, Paul Fox suggested getting film highlights of about 45 minutes of three or four Spanish League matches from the home ground of Real Madrid and Barcelona, to be transmitted either in mid-week or on Saturday afternoons ‘to show the customers what football is really like’<sup>174</sup>. The European Cup had been a TV item in the previous years, and the spectacular football skills of five-time winners Real Madrid, with their flamboyant stars Puskas and Di Stefano, had been already witnessed by British viewers, along with the quality of play of other European national teams, such as Hungary; therefore, why not try foreign football on television? It would be both an alternative choice for the audience and a stimulating provocation for the FA and the League.

The first move was to contact the FA in order to propose a new bid to obtain exclusive rights of the first six rounds and the semi-final round of the FA Cup during season 1960-61. The broadcasts would be on the same basis as proposed by ITV for League games, which meant that matches to be televised would be played either on Friday or Saturday evening. The bid was in the region of £45,000<sup>175</sup>. The BBC knew that this move was just a starting point: ‘the proposed

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> But Fox feared ‘that this measure may eventually be stopped by the Football league asking the F.A. to ask F.I.F.A. to ask the Spanish F.A. to stop’, he thought that they would be ‘able to get away with it for six to seven weeks before the machinery has acted’, *ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> ‘If the chosen match is drawn the BBC has the exclusive right to televise the replay on payment of an additional fee to be mutually agreed’, BBC WAC, T14/1447/4 – 3 August 1960, Dimmock to Rous.



£45,000 is a minimum offer, on which will be prepared to negotiate'<sup>176</sup>. The offer, though, presented

‘unusual administrative difficulties because while Members of The Football League Management Committee can theoretically act independently insofar as Football League matches are concerned, they are also Members of the Football Association and can influence decisions on Football Association matters’.<sup>177</sup>

There was a conflict of interest, in a few words, that might put in jeopardy the BBC’s offer to the FA in order to favour the agreement between the League and ITV. This was very clear to the BBC:

‘It may be that each organisation will prefer to conclude negotiations for the televising of the matches under their jurisdiction, but one has to remember that the Clubs whose matches will be televised, if the scheme is approved, are members of both The Football Association and The Football League. The Committee may be able, jointly, to work out a plan whereby the greatest benefit may accrue, but at the T.V. Sub-Committee which met recently (July 22<sup>nd</sup>) it failed to reach agreement because it became apparent that some of the parties represented were acting independently, thus destroying the whole object of the Committee.’<sup>178</sup>

Furthermore, just to highlight that the Corporation had never changed their mind in regard to a reduced amount of televised football, the BBC issued a press release declaring that they ‘believe that the televising of a smaller number of matches is a greater long-term advantage to football than covering a whole series of matches drawn from all Football League divisions’<sup>179</sup>. This, in other words, meant that if the BBC had made any bid for the televising of the whole League season, it had been made just because of competition with commercial television. The cartel had come to an end.

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/4 – 4 August 1960, ‘Press Statement’.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> *The Times*, 4 August 1960 (8g).

On Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> August 1960, an agreement between the League and Independent Television for exclusive live televising of 26 matches was almost reached. 'The fee to be paid to the league for these exclusive rights was not revealed'<sup>180</sup>, though. The first match to be televised would be played on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September at 7.30pm. The agreement was expected to be signed in the next 10 days, after all formalities were ratified. Feeble opposition to the agreement was made by Stanley Rous, who thought a meeting of the joint FA/League TV Sub-Committee should be called to hear what the League had to say about their arrangement with Independent Television<sup>181</sup>.

The Sub-Committee met on 12<sup>th</sup> August, and agreed that both the League and the FA Cup matches could be televised. BBC representatives, who had been invited to the meeting, were informed on their arrival at Lancaster Gate, where the meeting would be held, that Mr Richards and Mr Hardaker, President and Secretary of the League respectively, wished the meeting to be solely between representatives of the League and of the FA. But even Rous, who had been invited to the meeting, was unexpectedly refused admission. He managed, though, to have a copy of the minutes, which he promptly produced to the BBC. The most interesting point, from the BBC's point of view, was that the meeting had been extremely 'acrimonious', with the League making all sorts of allegations against the BBC, such as that *Grandstand* had not played fair, and that commentaries by Wolstenholme had denigrated English football. This attitude, of course,

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<sup>180</sup> *The Times*, 5 August 1960 (8e).

<sup>181</sup> An even feebler voice was that of Sir Tom O'Brien, President of the Federation of Film and Theatre Unions, who immediately sent a telegram to the BBC, ITA, the FA, and the League 'asking for a meeting between the unions and employers' organizations before "irretrievable decisions are taken".', *ibid*.



jeopardised any chance by the BBC to get an equal treatment in the negotiations. Rous reported that 'there was at one moment a chance that an equal sharing system between BBC and ITA could have been achieved', but this 'was nullified when the League showed concern about their negotiations with ITV and stated that they felt sure that if they agreed to a division ITV would pull out altogether'<sup>182</sup>. It was then felt necessary to have further discussion on the final terms of the agreement, especially as far as the number of games to be televised was concerned.

That meeting of the League Management Committee was held on 16<sup>th</sup> August, and this time it was finally declared that the Committee had accepted in principle the offer of £150,000 by Independent Television:

'Under the agreement, which is for 1960-61 only, the contractors have the exclusive right to televise five minutes of the end of the first half and the whole of the second half of 20 League matches played in the evening.'<sup>183</sup>.

Things were far from clear within the League itself, though. The first internal opposition was shown by Arsenal, who refused to play their First Division match home against Newcastle United before ITV cameras on 17<sup>th</sup> September. The main trouble was constituted by the matter of commercial advertising:

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<sup>182</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/4 – 12 August 1960, 'Meeting with Sir Stanley Rous'.

<sup>183</sup> 'Details of the proposed agreement include the following points: The contractors will pay £92,000 a season for exclusive rights. When a League match is televised they will pay the home club £250 for all facilities, out of which both clubs will make any necessary payments. They will also pay the League £50,000, of which £45,000 will be spent by the League with A.B.C. and A.T.V. (or other agreed contractors) in an advertising campaign. The contractors would pay for the services of an advertising agency and also pay the cost of the necessary "commercials". (...) If the Football Association allow the televising of a Cup semi-final, then the payment to the League will be £86,000 for 19 matches. Division One and Two teams would be mostly used, but later in the season outstanding teams in the Third and Fourth Divisions promotion "battle" would be considered.', *The Times*, 17 August 1960 (5e).

‘In calling for suspension of the Football League’s plan for televising 20 league matches, Arsenal said in a letter to the league on Saturday, that to commit the clubs to the scheme “is in our opinion most unconstitutional and frankly alarming”.

“In our view the league cannot afford to take part in an experiment of this kind, even if only for one season. The rewards are paltry compared with the losses which are certain to be sustained throughout the game”. While approving the league’s view about publicity and public relations, Arsenal claimed that these “could be achieved out of pools money and gate receipts levy rather than selling our birth-right for a mess of pottage”.’<sup>184</sup>.

Arsenal were not alone: ‘Everton F.C. also protested to the League about “unconstitutional” action’<sup>185</sup>. Thus, when everything seemed to have been settled, new discussions arose:

‘Four clubs – Arsenal, Everton, West Bromwich Albion, and Sheffield Wednesday – have decided not to support the agreement, 13 said the protests made by Arsenal and Everton had not been discussed, and the remaining five expressed support or qualified support.’<sup>186</sup>.

On the other hand, there were clubs that agreed completely with the Management Committee decision, like Bolton Wanderers and Blackpool, which would be the first clubs to be televised ‘live’ on 10<sup>th</sup> September, and which wanted ‘the arrangements to stand, whatever happens in future’<sup>187</sup>. What appears clear is that there was a lot of confusion in facing the whole matter, as can be understood by reading how Mr Carter, chairman of Reading Football Club as well as chairman of the committee which looked after the interests of the Third and Fourth Division

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<sup>184</sup> *The Times*, 22 August 1960 (5e).

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *The Times*, 23 August 1960 (12d).

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.* Other clubs will show their will in accepting the agreement: ‘Cardiff City, newly arrived in the First Division, are cautiously willing to give television a trial. (...) Mr. S. Cullis, manager of Wolverhampton Wanderers, said: “We have always been in favour of televising matches (...)”. (...) For West Ham United Mr. E. Chapman, the secretary, said: “We have an open mind about televised matches (...)”.’, *The Times*, 23 August 1960 (12d); ‘Newcastle United Football Club secretary, Mr. D. Barker, yesterday issued the following statement (...): “The directors have considered the proposals in respect of televising of matches during season 1960-61, (...), and, in principle, they agree”. Portsmouth Football Club will not oppose the televising of league matches (...): “The board is unanimously behind the management committee on this question. They are appointed to act on our behalf and we must abide by their decisions”.’, *The Times*, 24 August 1960 (5g).



clubs, 'expressed surprise at the controversy', given that 'he was confident that the league management committee had been given full powers to act'<sup>188</sup>. The clubs decided to have a further meeting on the whole question.

The meeting was held on the 24<sup>th</sup> August, but five hours of discussion were not enough to produce an official statement. Therefore another meeting was called for 8<sup>th</sup> September, just two days before the first match would be televised. It seemed that, regardless of any sort of decision that would be taken at the meeting, at least the Blackpool-Bolton match would be televised: 'An A.B.C. Television official said yesterday that as far as the company was concerned the programmes would go on as planned'<sup>189</sup>.

A huge amount of difficulties, though, was shadowing any chance to let the agreement go into effect. This negative trend can be spotted by reading what was reported by the press the day after this last meeting:

'Although the Blackpool-Bolton Association football match tomorrow will be seen on Independent Television, officials of the Football League refused yesterday to speculate about whether they would also put in effect plans for televising further games. The position is still in doubt because not all the clubs are in favour of granting television facilities. (...) Although there is a provisional agreement between the league and Independent Television companies, it has not yet been signed, and some of the clubs, led by Arsenal and Everton, with the backing of Sheffield Wednesday, West Bromwich, and Wolves, were known to be opposed to it. It was mainly for this reason that yesterday's meeting was called. It continued for more than two and a half hours.'<sup>190</sup>.

Other clubs decided to back this group of opposition right after the meeting, like Tottenham Hotspur, whose secretary, Mr. R. Jarvis said that, after a 'tentative enquiry' by the League about the televising of their match against Aston Villa to

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<sup>188</sup> *The Times*, 23 August 1960 (12d).

<sup>189</sup> *The Times*, 27 August 1960 (4e).

<sup>190</sup> *The Times*, 9 September 1960 (6d).

be played on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> September before Independent Television cameras, 'it was decided to inform the league that we would not allow any of our matches to be screened until after the extraordinary general meeting in October or November'<sup>191</sup>.

The Blackpool-Bolton game was eventually televised from Bloomfield Road. The match kicked off at 6:50pm with live coverage starting at 7:30 under the title "The Big Game". It was the first time ever a League match was broadcast live on television. It would remain the one and only televised game for more than twenty years. Here are some excerpts from the reports of that match as published on the local newspapers:

'To the TV audience this first League match on television was probably preferable to a few of those American imports direct from the corn belt which pass for entertainment and cost so many dollars. There was plenty of action, a spurt or two of drama, and, at least, the end was not predictable. But to the faithful who watched it at close range and not on the little silver screen nearly everything was a lot too familiar. The TV cameras have often filmed Real Madrid and others of the Continental masters. But they just can't make Real Madrid out of two ordinary English teams which were all that Blackpool and Bolton Wanderers were in this desperate match.'<sup>192</sup>.

'As an initial television show-piece the Blackpool-Bolton game was poor advertisement for League football, lacking even the cup-tie tension of a typical Lancashire "Derby" struggle. (...) TV nerves have been suggested as part explanation and there may be something in this theory, but to me a much more important factor was the general inability to control a lively ball on a treacherous surface.'<sup>193</sup>.

There were, and there would be, too many troubles in this controversy about the matter of television to hope that a breakthrough would eventually be achieved by television services. It had been a good effort; it was not good enough to get the whole lot at stake, though. And the loss of gate of the match in question, with a

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<sup>191</sup> *The Times*, 10 September 1960 (4f).

<sup>192</sup> *West Lancashire Evening Gazette*, Blackpool, 12 September 1960 (5b).

<sup>193</sup> *Bolton Evening News*, Bolton, 12 September 1960 (7g).



decline of 6,000 on the average Blackpool crowd (also caused, to be fair, by the absence of big box office draw Stanley Matthews through injury), did not help the situation:

‘There were 29,216 at the Bolton match when it was played on the afternoon of the first day last season. There were 35,053 for the Wolves game a year ago in mid-September. There were 17,166 at this first League TV fixture. That could and probably will give a lot of ammunition to the anti-TV rebels.’<sup>194</sup>.

Of course it was not just because of television that crowds started declining: this was a slippery slope caused by many other factors, as highlighted by *The Times*:

‘One fact, however, must remain a matter of deep concern with the rulers of the League. Gates generally continue on the downward path. The aggregate attendance of Saturday was 95,000 fewer than the corresponding day a year ago. (...) Only attractive football will save the situation. With the spread of wealth, the influence of hire-purchase, the increase of car owners, and the rivalry of counter-attractions, the customer has become more selective.’<sup>195</sup>.

Thus there was the awareness that football was experiencing troubles in terms of general attraction to the public. And televised football, at least according to League clubs’ point of view, would make things even worse. The League was going to slam the door in the face of television yet again.

As a first consequence of the very likely refusal of the ITV’s proposal by the League, also the FA/BBC agreement for television of FA Cup ties would be broken:

‘Following discussion between H.O.B.Tel. (*Dimmock*) and F.A. Secretary BBC will withdraw their F.A. Cup T.V. proposals should Football League decide to abandon ITV deal because BBC wish to make it clear that they had always been in favour only limited amount of televised football as

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<sup>194</sup> *West Lancashire Evening Gazette*, 12 September 1960 (5d).

<sup>195</sup> *The Times*, 12 September 1960 (16e).

agreed and arranged through joint Football Association and Football League Television Committee.’<sup>196</sup>.

After a few days of discussion on the matter, it was eventually decided to call the FA/BBC agreement definitely off, regardless of the definition of the League/ITV agreement, and the news was officially given by the press on 27<sup>th</sup> September:

‘The first two rounds of the Football Association Cup will not be seen “live” on television (...). Sir Stanley Rous, (...), said after the meeting: “It does not necessarily follow that the council would agree to allow live television even if the Football League did”.’<sup>197</sup>.

Anyway, it was not so difficult to foresee that the League/ITV agreement would come to a premature end, and early in October the press was able to announce that an agreement on the televising of football matches for that season had been reached between football and television authorities, and ‘a list of matches was settled on for televising and the television bodies agreed on a rota basis for showing them’. But ‘none of the matches is a league or cup fixture’<sup>198</sup>.

### **A rota for the good of the game**

The eventual settling of the situation did not discourage the BBC, and Peter Dimmock in particular, from trying to convince the League clubs to ban any live television of League football in principle, though. Early in November 1960, Dimmock forwarded a confidential letter to all Football League clubs, as well as

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<sup>196</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/4 – 22 September 1960, Dimmock to C.P. Television.

<sup>197</sup> *The Times*, 27 September 1960 (3e). However: ‘The B.B.C. said last night that yesterday’s announcement referred to live televising of the matches. Under existing agreements excerpts from the matches would be filmed and included in television sports programmes.’, *ibid*.

<sup>198</sup> *The Times*, 4 October 1960 (7d). ‘Independent Television will begin the series by televising the Manchester United v. Real Madrid match on October 13. The list includes internationals between English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish teams and other countries, games between British and foreign teams, and friendly games between British teams.’, *ibid*.



to the League Management Committee, 'in a move to end the deadlock over the televising of league football'<sup>199</sup>. After having underlined the loyalty of the Corporation towards the League and sports in general (as usual in this kind of letter), it was pinpointed, yet again, how the televising of 'selected and restricted' number of League matches, which 'should NOT be televised on a Saturday', would work in the best interests of football. The BBC would be 'prepared to pay as much per match – and in the case of F.A. Cup matches, rather more – than the reported offers from Independent Television'<sup>200</sup>. However, the BBC, which after all the turmoil caused by the failed ITV/League agreement, wanted to show how willing they were to look after the interests of football, felt that

'the only way to restore confidence all round would be for a pool scheme to be negotiated for the season 1961-62 between your Management Committee, the BBC and the Independent Television Programme Companies, with the knowledge of the Television Sub-Committee. (...) In this way too it should be possible to set aside before the season begins an agreed number of definite television dates while still allowing a degree of flexibility for a number of matches to be covered ad hoc as at present. Such a scheme would, we believe, be not only financially advantageous to League Football but also in its best long term interests.'<sup>201</sup>

The proposal was discussed early in December by the joint FA/League Television Sub-Committee, and it was agreed that

'before next season the two bodies should try to arrange a programme of matches about once a week on a set night in midweek and not on Saturday, so that other fixtures could be made to avoid clashing with that night.'<sup>202</sup>

The idea, according to what had been suggested by Rous during the meeting, was to give all the parties fair representation on television (the FA with international and representative matches, the League with inter-league games, and the clubs

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<sup>199</sup> *The Times*, 16 November 1960 (6f).

<sup>200</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/4 – 4 November 1960, Dimmock to the League.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> *The Times*, 6 December 1960 (6c).

with Cup ties and League matches), and to include the selected matches in a rota for the BBC and Independent Television. The philosophy lying behind this idea was more in the general interest of 'the good of the game' (in usual Rous's style), rather than being oriented towards the economic aspect of the matter (an overall exclusive contract would have meant much more money). Under these terms the BBC would get much more advantage than commercial television; on the other hand, Independent Television companies would get at least something to capitalise on, somehow.

Before the decision by the joint sub-committee would be taken, television people started planning their bids, and a BBC/ITV cartel was once again formed. In February 1961, the BBC started internal discussion on the economic terms of the bid, and Oaten suggested a change in the scale of fees that had been in operation for the last three seasons, even though it had been told by Gerry Loftus that 'the Independent boys will not be prepared to increase the money very much but does agree that a review of this scale is due', and that 'the League may be a stumbling block as they cannot get out of their minds the fact that £6-7,000 has been offered for matches'<sup>203</sup>. In fact, any kind of effort made by the television services was to be vain. When the joint Sub-Committee met early in June 1961, they firmly decided that 'televising of matches in 1961-62 shall again be confined to internationals and European cup-ties played in midweek and the F.A. Cup

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<sup>203</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/5 – 18 February 1961, Oaten to Dimmock.



final'<sup>204</sup>. The BBC and ITV had to be satisfied only with a much reduced number of fixtures, and they had to share their televising according to a rota basis<sup>205</sup>.

The results of these negotiations as well as some other divergences arising from the joint Sub-Committee, such as the fact that meetings were not being held on any kind of regular basis, with the result that *ad hoc* decisions were taken ('sometimes without the knowledge of all the parties concerned'), led Peter Dimmock to ask Follows whether the Sub-Committee itself was 'really fulfilling the purpose for which it was originally designed'<sup>206</sup>.

### Researching the audience

With competition from commercial television, the BBC was taking the matter of televised sports even more seriously than before, understanding that it was one field where they could widen the gap in terms of authority and credibility. Therefore, in order to improve the quality of their offer and to better understand what their audience were really like, a series of Audience Research Reports was carried out between 1960 and 1961.

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<sup>204</sup> *The Times*, 5 June 1961 (6c).

<sup>205</sup> Just to give the flavour of some of the ridiculous situation that arose from this system: 'The I.T.V. representative and I tossed up for the match on the rota and I won so it will become an item in Grandstand on Saturday afternoon, 12<sup>th</sup> August', regarding the televising of the FA Charity Shield match between Tottenham Hotspurs and an England XI; see BBC WAC, T14/1447/5 – 5 July 1961, internal circular by Oaten. The rota for season 1961-62 was as follows: BBC: FA Charity Shield 2<sup>nd</sup> half (Sat 12/08/61), Football League-League of Ireland 2<sup>nd</sup> half (Wed 11/10/61), England-Portugal (Wed 25/10/61), England-Ireland (Wed 22/11/61), England-Turkey U23 2<sup>nd</sup> half (21/03/62), England-Austria (04/04/62); ITV: Football League-Italian League (Wed 08 or 15/11/61), England-Israel U23 (Thu 02 or 09/11/62), Football League-Scottish League (Wed 21/03/62), Amateur Cup Final (Sat 14/04/62), England-Young England (Fri 04/05/62), England-Switzerland (Wed 09/05/62). The Cup final would be shared. No European Cup dates were yet known and the deal for the matches to be televised would be made on an ad hoc basis. See BBC WAC, T14/1447/5 – 4 August 1961, 'Association Football'.

<sup>206</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/5 – 9 June 1962, Dimmock to Follows.

One of those reports wanted to find out ‘Attendance at outdoor sporting events by viewers and non-viewers (and what they do on Saturday and Sunday afternoons in winter)’, with a particular attention dedicated to football. Key-point of this research, carried out by the British Institute of Public Opinion (a third, impartial side), was to discover the habits of viewers regarding actual attendances at football grounds. The results showed how ‘nearly half of those with TV said they went to a soccer match within the last year’, while the proportion among those without TV was only about a third; furthermore, when asked their thoughts on the cause of declining attendances at football matches, only 4% said ‘watching the TV outside broadcast of the game in comfort was one of the main arguments against spending an afternoon at a football match’. Not only would these results be an interesting point of reference for future developments of sport programming, but they would be extremely useful to the football authorities for future negotiations too<sup>207</sup>.

Another interesting Audience Research Report from August 1961 concerned sports commentators. After having received a special questionnaire purposely drew by the Audience Research Department, a number of members of the Television Panel of viewers were asked to indicate their opinion of specified commentators according to a scale of A (exceptionally good), B (good), or C (not so good). The final result of this research was that only two out of the 24 commentators on trial were considered ‘exceptionally good’ by more than 60% of interviewees, being cream-of-the-crop rugby commentator Peter West and, of

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<sup>207</sup> See: BBC WAC, R9/10/7 – January 1960, ‘Audience Research Report – VR/60/125’.



course, Kenneth Wolstenholme. The virtues of the latter, according to the results of the research, were 'his distinctive personality, vigour, easy and intimate handling of interviews, and clear, quick-fire style of broadcasting'<sup>208</sup>. OB Head Peter Dimmock came third in this particular list of appreciation (59% of A), being described as 'a past-master at talking fast and at the same time being very well understood', with particular attention 'to his lively and factual way of presenting the scene, pleasant personality and unaffected manner'. Other commentators who gathered positive consensus and were considered 'exceptionally good' were: cricket commentator Brian Johnston (54% of A); motor-racing expert Raymond Baxter (50%); future BBC sport voice *par excellence* David Coleman (49%); and, well behind this leading group, boxing commentator Harry Carpenter (36%). Among the others, football commentator Walley Barnes gathered only 5% of A, 35% of B and 21% of C, resulting unfamiliar to 39% of the people involved in the research. He, despite the fact that one viewer described him as 'the most improved commentator', was criticised for his 'jerky style, (...) poor voice, and tendency to talk too much'. As a whole, the BBC commentators' panel was considered as giving 'very satisfactory coverage and maintaining a high standard in a job which was said to need confidence and practice'<sup>209</sup>.

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<sup>208</sup> BBC WAC, R9/10/8 – 24 August 1961, 'Audience Research Report – VR/61/427'. There were a small minority who were not too keen on Wolstenholme, too. For them 'he was apt to talk too much, his superfluous remarks detracted from their enjoyment, and he sounded rather pompous', *ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> See BBC WAC, R9/10/8 – 24 August 1961, 'Audience Research Report – VR/61/427'. Even though 'two viewers said that they considered ITV racing commentaries superior', *ibid.*

## Hopeless hopes

Interesting new developments in negotiations came only for the 1962/63 season, when a new filming agreement was signed on 'amicable terms', the BBC having to sacrifice complete exclusivity<sup>210</sup>. Other points of discussion on the matter regarded the scale of fees to be paid by the two television services to get rights of transmission, with an average rate of increase of 25% from season to season throughout this time span<sup>211</sup>. Anyway, in Jack Oaten's opinion, the BBC were 'getting football now more cheaply than before the rota operated'<sup>212</sup>.

In 1963/64 the BBC decided to drop the televising of Football League games throughout the season. This decision was taken by the League as an open insult: 'to prefer F.A. Cup games only (...) was adding, in their eyes, insult to injury'<sup>213</sup>. The League had become 'the real power in the football land'<sup>214</sup>, according to what Bryan Cowgill, new Head of Sports Programmes at the BBC, thought; and football authorities as a whole were controlling the situation at the TV Sub-Committee, having the 'whip hand', as Oaten pinpointed:

'when it began we were co-operating to find the best way to handle football in the interest of T.V. and sport; in recent years we have gone along to "take orders", and our own views have not been asked for, or if offered, ignored.'<sup>215</sup>.

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<sup>210</sup> 'It was in this season that we began to ask ourselves seriously if Sports Special justified its cost and place in schedule', BBC WAC, T14/1447/6 – 18 September 1963, Oaten to Dimmock. The programme was eventually dropped next season, and maintained just for FA Cup dates only.

<sup>211</sup> Just to give some example: Afternoon Home international: 1961-62 £2,250 / 1962-63 and 1963-64 £2,800; Evening Under 23 International: 1961-62 £1,750 / 1962-63 £2,185; Inter-League matches: 1961-62 £2,500 / 1962-63 and 1963-64 £3,125; FA Cup Final: 1961-62 £15,000 / 1962-63 and 1963-64 £18,750. See BBC WAC, T14/1447/5 – Summer 1962, 'Association Football'; and BBC WAC, T14/1447/4 – 10 July 1963, 'The Football Association. Television Sub-Committee. Minutes of a meeting'.

<sup>212</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/5 – 24 July 1962, 'Fees for Television Soccer'.

<sup>213</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/6 – 18 September 1963, 'Television of Football: summary of negotiations 1956-63 with the Football League'.

<sup>214</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/6 – 12 December 1963, 'Football'.

<sup>215</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/6 – 9 December 1963, 'Football'.



On the other hand Oaten himself thought that the BBC had failed to make their position as members of the Sub-Committee 'absolutely clear'. But, as Oaten concluded in his letter to Dimmock,

'League football is steadily losing its gates and its appeal; the time will come when it will decide to be more co-operative. Meanwhile we will have to accept the restrictions they can place before us, but I think we must do this with dignity.'<sup>216</sup>.

The time to be more co-operative, though, had not come yet, as can be understood by reading some extracts of the minutes of a meeting of the Sub-Committee held just a few days after the above mentioned letter. Just to give an idea:

'No matches shall be televised without the authority of the Television Sub-Committee. (...) No matches between foreign team shall be televised on Sundays. (...) Excerpts not exceeding 30 minutes will be permitted at any time after 10 p.m. on the evening of the match provided the permission of the Television Committee has been sought and obtained. The excerpts will not exceed 30 minutes. (...) Any approaches by the Television Companies for the installation of facilities will be made to the Clubs concerned after permission for the showing of excerpts has been obtained from the Committee. A newsreel flash not exceeding two minutes may be included in a regularly scheduled news bulletin provided permission has been obtained for the filming of the match, or excerpts there from, by the Clubs concerned.'<sup>217</sup>.

In these recommendations there were at least a couple of points that were in total disagreement with the 'Guiding Principles for Co-operation between Television and Football' that had been issued in autumn 1960 by the European

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/6 – 17 December 1963, 'The Football Association Television Sub-Committee'. On the last point 'Mr Richards said that the Football League would have to discuss separately with the Television Authorities whether newsreel flashes of League matches could be permitted.', *ibid.*

Broadcasting Union (EBU, also known as Eurovision)<sup>218</sup> in agreement with the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA). As far as the televising of foreign football was concerned, for instance, Art. 3 said:

‘The televising of a football match is conditional upon authorisation being given by the national or international association under whose auspices the match is organised. In the case of relays of matches played (...) the television authority will inform its national football association of such relays beforehand with a view to working out some mutually satisfactory agreement. Such an arrangement will, however, never involve any payment whatsoever in this case.’<sup>219</sup>

The core of this article, in a few words, meant that the national football authorities should be informed, but should never be considered as the institution to give the last word on the broadcasting or not of the games in question. And as far as newsreel flashes were concerned, Art. 8 said:

‘It is common ground that every television organisation may, by virtue of the right of free access to news which it can assert in the fulfilment of its mission, broadcast in its newsreel programmes free of charge filmed sequences up to nine minutes in length of any match. As such transmissions are a valuable advertisement for football, organisers should provide facilities for obtaining the necessary coverage.’<sup>220</sup>

How distant the position of the Sub-Committee was! Besides, if it is considered that, as stated in Art. 12, ‘the EBU coordinates Eurovision programmes and that the UEFA, a co-ordinating body, controls the national football associations’<sup>221</sup>, it can be clear to everyone how the Sub-Committee was breaching recommendations that should have been followed quite strictly.

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<sup>218</sup> The European Broadcasting Union was formed on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1950 by 23 broadcasting organisations from Western Europe and the Mediterranean. Its purposes were, and still are nowadays, to negotiate broadcasting rights for major sports events, to operate the Eurovision and Euroradio networks, to organise programme exchanges, to stimulate and coordinate co-productions, and to provide a full range of other operational, commercial, technical, legal and strategic services. It is based in Brussels.

<sup>219</sup> BBC WAC, E18/415 – October 1960, ‘Guiding Principles for Co-operation between Television and Football’.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.



These breaches were made clear to Denis Follows, who had taken over from Stanley Rous as FA Secretary after Rous had been appointed President of FIFA, by Peter Dimmock. He, on returning from a meeting at the EBU headquarters in Geneva, highlighted how the Sub-Committee's decision to ban all further relays in Great Britain of Eurovision transmissions of football matches on Sundays, was contrary to the spirit of the Vienna Agreement of March 1955. In that agreement all the European national football authorities agreed not to object to the relays of Internationals and other European football matches relayed by EBU, provided always that such transmissions did not clash with other football matches being played at the same time in the relaying country (a principle that had been reaffirmed in the 'Guiding Principles' of 1960):

'This ban may well have repercussions in the Eurovision countries because the basis of the negotiation for these matches has been on the principle that they will be available to other Eurovision countries provided the programme does not clash with other matches.'<sup>222</sup>.

The final result of this controversy on the televising of foreign football was that the request to clear things would be taken in consideration by the Sub-Committee, and that still in July 1964, Dimmock could say that 'although the F.A. and Football League are still basically against "live" football, we are hoping that they will restore their permission for us to relay some of the Sunday afternoon Eurovision transmissions'<sup>223</sup>.

Hopes, hopes, hopes: this was the situation of live football at the end of almost ten years of fierce struggles and competition. A competition that, in the sporting arena still saw the Corporation, despite ITV's efforts, in a position of

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<sup>222</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/6 – 24 December 1963, Dimmock to Follows.

<sup>223</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/6 – 20 July 1964, 'TV Football Coverage 1964/65 Season'.

clear superiority, at least in the general opinion of the audience, as highlighted in *The Times*: ‘in the domain of sport the B.B.C. knocks I.T.V. into a cocked hat’<sup>224</sup>.

However, television was now on its way to become a factor in the dawning process of commercialisation of the game, as pinpointed by Howard and Sayce: ‘arguably, the effects of commercial interests accelerated in England in the 1960s with the rise of the popularity of TV’<sup>225</sup>. That was the beginning of a new commercial era for football in Britain; an era started with the lifting of the maximum wage in 1961<sup>226</sup>, and in which ‘the interests of sponsors and the commercial needs of clubs began to coincide’<sup>227</sup>. Incomes from the gates would soon be no longer the only source of financing for the clubs: if in 1960 gate receipts accounted for about 85% of the total income of the average League club, by the late Seventies it had fallen to less than 75%<sup>228</sup>.

Although, this new trend of commercialisation of the game showed soon its drawbacks, undermining the structure of equal redistribution between big and small clubs that had characterised the League since its foundation:

‘From the 1960s the inequalities between professional clubs began to grow. In 1950 the income ratio between Division One and Division Three clubs was 2:1. By 1970 it had grown to 5:1. By 1995 it had reached 10:1. It has been growing larger ever since that date’<sup>229</sup>.

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<sup>224</sup> *The Times*, 28 March 1964 (5e).

<sup>225</sup> Howard, Sophie/Sayce, Rhiannon, *Branding, Sponsorship and Commerce in Football – Fact Sheet n°11*, Leicester: Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research, 2002, p. 1.

<sup>226</sup> The maximum wage was abolished in 1961 after George Eastham challenged Newcastle United’s right to refuse him a transfer in a court of law. The ‘retain and transfer’ system had previously existed unchallenged. After that case players had the right to decide their own destiny.

<sup>227</sup> Howard/Sayce, *Branding, Sponsorship...*, p. 2.

<sup>228</sup> See Mason, ‘Football’, p. 181.

<sup>229</sup> Williams/Neatrou, *The ‘New’ Football Economics...*, p. 4.



### Chapter III

#### *Sowing the Seeds of Transformation, 1964-1982*

*'With their close-ups, careful camera angles, behind-goal trajectories and general positioning, BBC and ITV cameramen and production units have made TV soccer a fine art. They have broken through that invisible barrier which separates the game from the onlooker in his armchair. Players are not seen mechanically, like faceless men banging about a ball, but as real personalities. In fact, one can often get closer to them on television than from the stands and terraces.'*

(Derek Dougan, *The Listener*, 5 September 1974)

*'The television companies have made it abundantly clear that they can pay vast sums for the World Cup, and compete with each other at the same time. The fact that the two companies have combined on this issue to get football on the cheap from us is wrong. We have been the ones painted black but I think we have come out of this whiter than white.'*

(David Goldstone, member of League Management Committee representing Cardiff, *The Times*, 8 June 1974)

In 1960, less than ten years after the decision allowing the birth of a second television channel, Macmillan's Conservative government set up a committee, the Pilkington Committee, in order to enquire about the state of television and, possibly, to find out whether or not there were the need and the conditions for awarding the concession of a third channel. This time the BBC had learnt the lesson and, while the ITV companies 'were too busy feuding with each other, diversifying their investments and playing tycoon'<sup>1</sup> rather than taking care of the

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<sup>1</sup> Tunstall, *British Media...*, p. 40.

Pilkington enquiry, the BBC began an ardent courtship to gain the third channel. When in 1962 the result of the enquiry came out, it was so sympathetic and enthusiastic towards the public corporation, as well as ferociously critical of the commercial network, that it seemed clear that the third channel must be awarded to the BBC. So, when Macmillan, in his last days of Government, awarded the BBC a new channel to be launched in 1964, nobody was either surprised or outraged.

BBC2's first transmissions were characterised by a sort of understatement, being available, at least for the first two years, just for those few people in London and the South-East who had installed the aerial necessary to receive the new UHF/625 frequency. It broadcast only four hours each evening. In fact, since its birth BBC2 has been the channel for the BBC's technological and cultural experiments. Particular 'firsts' were the UHF (not VHF) band transmission on 625 (not 405) lines, and colour transmission, that was launched in 1967<sup>2</sup>. BBC2, despite keeping this minor role for a long time, for the Corporation was the perfect place to find out whether or not something was worth producing. And, among the other experimental programmes, was the home for one of the more durable and successful football programmes ever: *Match of the Day*.

This chapter takes off just from the launch of that BBC programme of football highlights, which can be considered as a formidable turning point in this reconstruction of the relationship between television services and football authorities, and stretches until the early Eighties, when an agreement for live

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<sup>2</sup> The official opening of colour transmission was on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1967. Although, experimental colour transmissions had already been broadcast on BBC2 since July 1967. See: *BBC Handbook 1968*.



League football on TV was reached. Two phases can be spotted in these almost twenty years. The first phase, running up to 1973 is characterised by the reaffirmation of BBC's superiority, with the success of *Match of the Day* and the televising of the 1966 World Cup. Dimmock's preoccupation, expressed well before the creation of the commercial network, that ITV would challenge and possibly overtake the BBC in sports coverage, in the Sixties appeared still short of reality. It was only at the end of the decade that, finally and after long internal discussion, it was decided to set up a Central Sports Unit in order to organise the whole sports broadcasting of ITV: it really was a late kick-off.

This delay paid off in the '70s, though, with the new Sports Unit obtaining quite successful achievements. And in the second half of the decade ITV was ready to perpetrate what was called the 'snatch of the day', when commercial television finally managed to get a contract for League football highlights on Saturday, so far a BBC's exclusivity. But, despite all the efforts, ITV never managed to overtake the BBC as far as audience figures and popular appreciation went.

Then in 1983, live League football came. But that is a wholly different story.

### **The 'Matches of those Days'**

In August 1964 news broke in the press that a new agreement between the Football League and the BBC for 50-minute recordings of League matches to be shown on BBC2 early on Saturday evenings had been reached. 'Mr. Alan Hardaker (...) said that the contract was for one season. The first three showings

referred to would be at 6.30 and after that they would probably be later'<sup>3</sup>. This agreement was the act of birth of a new BBC programme that would become an important part of the history of British television: *Match of the Day (MOTD)*.

According to Dennis Follows, Secretary of the FA, the agreement represented a 'flagrant breach of faith by the Football League'. The FA officials contended that the timing of the agreement was so much at variance with accepted principles (a maximum of 30 minutes of recorded films of matches not to be shown before 9.30pm) that its terms should have been discussed by the Television Sub-Committee, and not separately by the League and the BBC. Follows was outraged by the agreement, and particularly surprised that the Corporation had acted in this way, without letting the FA know anything about the terms of the agreement before signing the contract, in particular the point about the scheduling early in the evening. He even doubted 'whether he personally would ever forget the incident and that it would certainly affect his future attitude towards the BBC', threatening that the FA might decide to disregard the Television Sub-Committee and that they would offer ITV exclusive rights for the transmission of FA matches on Saturday afternoons regardless of any possible objection by the League. Dimmock's opinion was that Follows was incensed mainly by the Football League Management Committee's refusal to approach the FA about the agreement, and that he was trying to use the Corporation as a lever against Hardaker:

'There is clearly a strong personal breach between Follows and Hardaker and not only over our tv contract. It goes much deeper than this and really relates to the whole question of the relative authority of the FA and FL

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<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 20 August 1964 (5g).



(*Football League*). I think that Follows is anxious to establish his, and the F.A.'s authority, but that in this particular instance he has overplayed his hand.'<sup>4</sup>

The FA, though, had to accept what was decided at a meeting of the Sub-Committee facing the matter of this agreement, after which it was officially stated that 'as a contract has been entered into between the B.B.C. and the Football League, it had to be observed', even though the 'B.B.C. have promised to examine the position with a view to changing the time after the first three showings, the times of which will stand'<sup>5</sup>.

'The seeds of this transformation between football and its fans had been sown with the introduction of the BBC's *Match of the Day*', as Haynes says<sup>6</sup>; and it is not inappropriate to say that the programming of League football highlights on *MOTD* transformed the game for the fans 'from a Saturday afternoon activity in all weathers to a Saturday night home entertainment', as Holt highlights<sup>7</sup>.

New technological developments, such as electronic cameras and videotape, which allowed pictures from outside broadcast to be transmitted and recorded for editing immediately after the final whistle of the game, made programmes using filmed highlights, like *Sports Special* suddenly obsolete. The first screening ever of the programme was broadcast at 6.30pm on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, and was placed on BBC2. This meant that, being the signal of the new channel receivable only in the South-East of England, an estimated audience of 20,000, less than half the actual attendance at Anfield Road where the first 'Match of the Day' between Liverpool

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<sup>4</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/6 – 25 August 1964, 'Relations between BBC TV/Football Association'.

<sup>5</sup> *The Times*, 20 August 1964 (5g).

<sup>6</sup> Haynes, *Sport for the Slothful...*, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> Holt, *Sport and the British...*, p. 318.

and Arsenal took place, could listen to Wolstenholme welcoming them to 'Beatleville', and watched Roger Hunt scoring for the Reds after only eleven minutes (Liverpool eventually won 3-2).

The first two editions of *MOTD* remained on BBC2, changing hours of scheduling (7pm in 1964-65; 10.45pm in 1965-66). The programme 'started more as a nervous experiment than as a market leader', and it was only England's triumph in the 1966 World Cup that 'propelled the game into a peak time slot on BBC1'<sup>8</sup>. In 1967-68 the average audience was already around 5 million. It cost about £80,000 an hour, much more expensive than any other sports broadcast; but it was a programme well worth this amount of money, as would be confirmed by the huge audience figures, sometimes peaking at 14 million, that followed in the years to come.

*MOTD* has changed few of its presenters since the early days. In the beginning there was Kenneth Wolstenholme; in the 1970 season, when the two-match format was established<sup>9</sup>, he was supported by David Coleman. Then in 1973-74 Jimmy Hill took over, with the help of John Motson, Barry Davies, and Bob Wilson, former Arsenal goalkeeper. Hill presented the programme until 1988, when he was replaced by Des Lynam, who had joined the programme in 1979 as a commentator<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Motson, John, *Match of the Day – The complete record since 1964*, London: 1994, pp.6-7.

<sup>9</sup> In 1969-70 viewers still saw one match only nationwide, with BBC regions covering a second match to be shown just in their area. That was a signpost to the future development of the format.

<sup>10</sup> Current *MOTD* presenter Gary Lineker, former England captain, joined as a pundit in 1995 before becoming backup to Des Lynam; Lineker became main presenter after Lynam's departure in 1999.



## Hostilities are open

After the row following the BBC/League agreement, the awkward situation between the Corporation and the FA did not get any better. In March 1965, the FA decided to discontinue the contributions to the PFA's insurance scheme, signed in 1956, in consideration of which players agreed to appear in certain television matches<sup>11</sup>. The official motivation given by the FA was that 'they intended to discontinue the £4,000 payment to a joint accident fund in view of the new accident insurance for players proposed by the Football League'. Therefore, even though 'the F.A. did not intend to discontinue the £1,000 payment to P.F.A. funds for television appearances'<sup>12</sup> (which sounded like a sort of deception of both the PFA and television authorities), the first consequence of this unilateral decision was that the televising of the Cup Final would be in serious jeopardy, given that the PFA would not authorise its members to play in televised FA Cup matches.

The dispute lasted the whole month of March, and was sorted out only thanks to the common sense of PFA officials, when they decided to lift the ban, offering the FA to restore payments under the former agreement and to negotiate a new one for the future. The FA eventually restored the 1956 agreement and everything was settled, at least as far as the PFA were concerned.

The general situation was probably as follows: there was a struggle between the FA and the League, and in particular between Follows and Hardaker, over which body should have the whip in hand in governing football in England, and even though the FA remained the governing body, the real power was sliding

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<sup>11</sup> The scheme consisted of an annual sum of £4,000 from television fees to be paid in a 'players accident fund', plus further £1,000 to the PFA as lump sum for television appearances.

<sup>12</sup> *The Times*, 9 March 1965 (6e).

towards the League, and the BBC/League 'MOTD Agreement' represented a key moment in this change of guard. Cowgill, affirming how happy he and all the Sports department were for the success in terms of critics and audience that *MOTD*, 'by far the most successful presentation of football on television', was being generally acknowledged, he did not hide his opinion that the BBC 'will turn out to have backed the winner in the end'<sup>13</sup>.

In April 1965 Bryan Cowgill, Head of Sports at the OB department<sup>14</sup>, reported to his boss that Follows was still in a state of 'open hostility' towards the BBC in general and the Sports department in particular<sup>15</sup>. And to make sure that Dimmock would be able to better understand this state of hostility he quoted some of the sentences he had been told on the phone by Follows himself: 'I shall do all I can in future to prevent the BBC from televising football', and 'you (*Cowgill*) are not fit to be dealt with and I am fed up with the BBC and all its works'<sup>16</sup>. This was probably a symptom of the clash between the FA and the League in the war for governing football, and television was an instrument to be used in this battle as well as an 'incidental' target<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> In March 1963 the OB department was split in two sections: 'Sports Programmes' and 'Event Programmes'. Bryan Cowgill was then appointed as Head of 'Sports Programmes'. By 1968, both BBC1 and ITV were allowed 450 hours a year of OB, and BBC2 225. At the BBC, 65% of these OBs were 'Sports Programmes' and 35% 'Events'. See: Dimmock, *Television Outside...*, pp. 5-9.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Dimmock addressed Follows as 'jealous of the League and furious with the BBC' in an internal memo in May 1965; BBC WAC, T14/1447/7 – 11 May 1965, 'Television of Association Football Matches: summary of current situation'.

<sup>16</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/7 – 29 April 1965, 'Mr. Denis Follows, Secretary of The Football Association'.

<sup>17</sup> The BBC Sports department were well aware of their instrumental utilisation by the FA in every situation of clashing with the League. Oaten to Dimmock: 'We have got to recognise first and foremost, that Follows is exploiting a situation which has been made to measure for him in his battle with the Football League. We are tools and it is unfortunate that one or two of our actions have provided him with a whipping boy to pursue his personal vendetta', BBC WAC, T14/1447/7 – 26 May 1965, 'Football: The F.A.'.



However, the FA were a body that could not be set aside in any kind of negotiation, and in consideration of the forthcoming televising of the 1966 World Cup, it would not be so useful to have a frontal clash with them. Therefore, there were many attempts to lower the tension, and the Sports department tried several times to get peaceful approaches with Follows, who, however, maintained a very negative attitude for quite a long while, and every excuse was a good one in order to make things difficult for the BBC.

A further moment of tension occurred when Follows refused permission to the BBC to show recorded highlights of the Stanley Matthews' testimonial match within *Grandstand*, saying that this match was not included in the list of fixtures to be televised agreed for the 1964-65 football season: 'whilst he insisted on the letter of the law, we were asking for some logic to be applied'<sup>18</sup>. The BBC showed the highlights, just to turn the heat on. If rigid application of the agreements had always been a sufficient reason for the Television Sub-Committee to turn down any negotiations for further games not originally included in the agreements to be televised, in those 'Follows days' logic was an even less applicable principle<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/7 – 11 May 1965, 'Television of Association Football Matches: summary of current situation'.

<sup>19</sup> Oaten to Dimmock: 'Where is the logic in banning Sunday afternoon matches when no other games are on? Where is the logic in banning a Cup Final recording which has already been seen 'live two hours earlier?', BBC WAC, T14/1447/7 – 26 May 1965, 'Football: The F.A.'.

When the Sub-Committee denied permission for showing edited highlights of a UEFA Cup Winners' Cup match<sup>20</sup>, Jack Oaten could not help saying to Dimmock that

'what originated, as I understood it in Rous's day, as a committee for joint consultation in the best interests of football and television, has developed into a sort of Star Chamber at which the Football authorities give orders to Television.'<sup>21</sup>.

Both Follows and the BBC Sports department were sticking to their guns. If on the one hand the BBC felt that a new Television Committee had to be constituted, with a general agreement that this new committee would deal 'promptly and fairly with matters placed before it', with no chances for misinterpretations nor for the one-sided manipulations of television all in favour of football<sup>22</sup>; on the other hand, Follows, as he wrote to Keith Adam, Director of TV-BBC, made clear that the FA were 'extremely dissatisfied with the way the B.B.C. has acted in recent months and unless we get some assurance that this situation improves it seems unlikely that we shall do any further business with the B.B.C.', and that the FA were 'in the position of sellers of a commodity which the B.B.C. wishes to buy'<sup>23</sup>.

Adam tried to soften the situation by writing a letter to Follows in which, reminding him of the fact the BBC had 'always sought to achieve programmes of advantage not only to our viewers but also to the great national sport of football', he hoped that the FA would accept their apology in order to 'look forward to

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<sup>20</sup> The game in question was the first leg of the semi-final between West Ham and Zaragoza, played on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1965, with the Hammer securing a 2-1 victory.

<sup>21</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/7 – 19 May 1965, 'Football Negotiations'.

<sup>22</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/1447/7 – 26 May 1965, 'Football: The F.A.'.

<sup>23</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/5 – 29 May 1965, Follows to Adam.



happier negotiations in the future' (he referred, of course, to the proposed list of fixtures to televise next season<sup>24</sup>). But Follows, demonstrating 'his Trade Union background'<sup>25</sup>, did not show any sign of receding from his position, saying that three breaches in less than one year (the 'Match of the Day Agreement' with the League; the showing of edited highlights of the Matthews' testimonial game; and the broadcasting of the recorded film of the FA Cup Final 30 minutes after the game had finished after that approval had not been granted by football authorities) had been 'serious breaches of agreement' that could not be 'glossed over by apologies for what are termed "misunderstandings"'<sup>26</sup>. Thus there remained 'only one alternative if satisfaction is not received and that is to cease, as far as possible, to do business with the B.B.C.'<sup>27</sup>.

It is quite difficult to understand what kind of 'satisfaction' Follows wished to receive; it is not so difficult, though, to realise how things would develop. Nobody, probably, was therefore surprised when, after the summer meeting of the FA at Folkestone early in July, the news came out that 'the Football Association have banned live television of all matches, except the F.A. Cup Final, next season'<sup>28</sup> (a two-year contract was still in force for the FA Cup Final).

When in September the press published the news that the FA was to allow ITV to screen excerpts from five mid-week international matches within an hour of the final whistle, it appeared clear how personal the clash between Follows and the BBC Sports department had become:

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<sup>24</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/7 – 2 June 1965, 'Football Association'.

<sup>25</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/7 – 21 June 1965, Dimmock to Adam.

<sup>26</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/7 – 11 June 1965, Follows to Adam.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> *The Times*, 5 July 1965 (10g).

‘The F.A. have sold these match recordings to ITV at a very cheap price deliberately to thwart us in return for what the F.A. allege were deliberate breaches of agreement on our part.’<sup>29</sup>.

During the row between the FA and the BBC, Independent Television had been working hard behind the scenes, and, apart from their direct involvement in the consortium to televise the forthcoming World Cup, it had started a series of negotiations with both the FA and the League. According to Jack Oaten, it apparently seemed that ITV had managed to buy rights for all four England’s internationals for the 1965-66 season (paying a fee of £500 each) and for the Football League-Scottish League game; furthermore, a scheme to cover the FA Cup had been negotiated too, and the agreement with the League in order to show four matches each Sunday, on a regional basis, instead of two as in the past, had been expanded<sup>30</sup>. Therefore, not only had the BBC to face the new negative attitude of the FA, but there was stronger competition from their commercial counterpart now. The Sports department was experiencing some trouble in the renewal of the existing ‘Match of the Day Agreement’ with the League. The latter argued that their hands were tied until a meeting between them, the FA and officials of the BBC took place; and Follows seemed to like the idea of deliberately delaying things until he settled the agreement with ITV.

At this point, it was realised at the BBC that stretching the rope would not take them anywhere. Therefore they started softer approaches with the FA, offering an agreement that did not include any live television of football but a fair amount of recorded highlights to show within a reasonable time-span after the

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<sup>29</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/8 – 15 September 1965, ‘The latest football situation’.

<sup>30</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/1447/8 – 13 September 1965, ‘Football on ITV’.



games in question had been played. This offer included: edited highlight programmes of 30 minutes duration (in special cases to be extended to 45 minutes) to be shown any time after 10pm; brief inserts not exceeding 5 minutes in duration into sport programmes at any time in the evening, provided these would not be billed in advance; the right to use football excerpts freely in once-yearly *Review of the Year* type programmes; up to five minutes of football film in all, and not more than two minutes of any one match, to be used in preview-type programmes intended to help the spreading of the popularity of the game among the audience. Furthermore, they kept asking for the constitution of a new Television Sub-Committee that should meet ‘at least once a month to take decisions on requests from the television organisations’<sup>31</sup>.

Finally, a meeting between the FA and the League was held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1965, and a decision was taken to increase the duration of recordings to be shown by the BBC in the evening of matches played earlier in that day from 30 minutes to 45 at weekends<sup>32</sup>. One week later the agreement went public, with the BBC and the FA jointly announcing that ‘their dispute over televising football matches had been settled after senior officials of both sides had met yesterday. “Match of the day” begins on B.B.C.2 tomorrow at 10.45p.m.’<sup>33</sup>.

This agreement was not the only, even though partial, success for the BBC. Another important positive result was the setting of a more consistent and updated

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<sup>31</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/1447/8 – 14 September 1965, ‘Association Football Agreement’.

<sup>32</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/1447/8 – 17 September 1965, Follows to Dimmock.

<sup>33</sup> *The Times*, 24 September 1965 (8d).

Television Sub-Committee that started, since 14<sup>th</sup> December 1965<sup>34</sup>, a series of meetings on a regular basis (monthly, and sometimes even fortnightly), as requested so many times by the OB department.

### Dire straits

In March 1966 a new season of negotiations got started. The first move was by Peter Dimmock, who contacted both Mears and Follows, President and Secretary of the FA respectively, in order to inform them about the BBC's scheme for televised football in 1966-67<sup>35</sup>. The scheme regarded: live televising of the FA Cup Final at a fee of £21,560 (to be shared equally with ITV); renewal of the agreement for coverage and recording of FA Cup matches from third round at a fee of £5,000 (but without the restrictions applied to some teams because of other contracts); continuance of current radio agreement for coverage of FA matches at £4,500; possibility to place a rota basis of recordings of Internationals, Representative and European matches (this was requested in order to get some England home internationals, that had been exclusivity of ITV in 1965-66); some experiments of closed-circuit television<sup>36</sup>; a Sunday afternoon programme during

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<sup>34</sup> Matters discussed at this first meeting, held at the FA's at Lancaster Gate, regarded: proposed new television agreement; closed circuit television; television of League matches; recorded highlights of Standard Liege-Liverpool; Youth Club Cup Final; ITV's request to extend edited recording of England-Poland from 30 to 45 minutes (denied); sound broadcasting; European clubs competitions; filming of FA Cup ties. There were present: Mears (who chaired the meeting), Donaldson, Linnitt, and Follows for the FA; Shipman, Richards and Hardaker for the League; Cowgill and Oaten for the BBC; Loftus for ITV; and Max-Muller for BBC Sound. See BBC WAC, R30/4426/2 – 14 December 1965, 'TV/Radio Sub-Committee – Minutes of a meeting'.

<sup>35</sup> Mears was contacted as he acted as Chairman of the 'Radio & Television Sub-Committee'.

<sup>36</sup> 'It might, for example, be possible in the case of the F.A. Cup to provide these facilities between two grounds without charge in those instances where the recordings are subsequently available for BBC transmission. The BBC feels that such an arrangement could work to the mutual advantage of the football authorities, fans and television viewers.', BBC WAC, T14/1447/9 – 9 March 1966,



the season, in addition to *MOTD*, in which each regional department of the BBC would present edited recordings of a match of particular interest for the region in question<sup>37</sup>; plus a proposal to the League to record one match from each round of the Football League Cup<sup>38</sup> for 30 minutes of edited highlights<sup>39</sup>.

Dimmock gave the FA notice of the intention of approaching the League<sup>40</sup>, not to incur in the same kind of trouble caused by the first 'Match of the Day Agreement'. As can be noted, there is no particular request for live television of football, apart from the FA Cup Final. But to manage a series of recorded highlights would be anyway some sort of success, especially in consideration of what Hardaker had declared to the press:

'Mr. Hardaker, after dismissing the suggestion that the League were afraid of television, said the whole question was how much football should be allowed to go on the screen. "The clubs feel there is too much filming of matches – two or three times a week is thought too much – and the general idea of clubs was to cut this down and increase the incomes", he said. "No one wants 'live TV'. The clubs feel it damages them on the day of the match (...)'<sup>41</sup>.

Hardaker, and the League, had a different scheme to counter-propose to the Sub-Committee. This scheme was as follows: the proposal of clearly stating that Saturday nights was BBC's and Sunday was ITV's prerogative, 'and neither Body

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Dimmock to Follows. A successful experiment of CCTV had already been carried in 1965 at Cardiff when Coventry City defeated the home team 2-1 for a Second Division match played on 6<sup>th</sup> October: 'Coventry had an attendance of 10,000 at home, only 2,000 fewer than watched the game live at Cardiff', *The Times*, 19 April 1966 (3f).

<sup>37</sup> The programme was to be called *Football Derby*.

<sup>38</sup> The League Cup was introduced in the 1960-61 season specifically as a mid-week floodlit tournament. It was a 'brainchild' of Alan Hardaker. In the early years of the competition, many of the top teams declined to take part, and it was only when in 1966 automatic European qualification was promised to the winners, as well as the choice of Wembley Stadium as regular venue for the Final since 1967, that the full League membership took part. Like the FA Cup, it is played on a knockout (single elimination) basis. Since 1982, the League Cup has been named after its sponsor.

<sup>39</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/1447/9 – 9 March 1966, Dimmock to Follows.

<sup>40</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/1447/9 – 9 March 1966, Dimmock to Mears.

<sup>41</sup> *The Times*, 25 March 1966 (5g).

should be allowed to show anything against the programmes of the other side'<sup>42</sup> (the BBC's request for the Sunday regional programme was then to be turned down); the suggestion to restrict any kind of midweek televised football to no more than four matches per month, and in any event not more than one per week; as a consequence of the previous suggestion, a proposal of a rota system to be shared by the two television bodies<sup>43</sup>; the suggestion of having special meetings of the Sub-Committee on the matter of 'Pay Television' and 'Closed Circuit Television'<sup>44</sup>.

The television companies did not fight back, and, despite some rumours of ITV offering £250,000 to the League for live television in April 1966 (immediately minimised by commercial people, as Granada's Loftus wrote to BBC's Cowgill: 'the recent story of the alleged £250,000 for live television seems to be giving clubs inflated ideas about the money we are willing to pay'<sup>45</sup>), both organisations agreed to the request of reducing the amount of football available to viewers. In a few words, the only practical result of all the negotiations was the decision by the BBC to move *MOTD* from BBC2 to BBC1, 'to make top football matches available to "the widest possible audience"'<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> BBC WAC, R30/4426/2 – 29 March 1966, 'Scheme for Television'.

<sup>43</sup> 'Every club should be asked whether or not they wish to take part in the Contracts made by The Football League and The Football Association, and if they do not, then it would be made quite clear to them that they will not be allowed to have television even if they play in Europe', *ibid*.

<sup>44</sup> There will be some other experiments of CCTV, like the one that took place at Anfield Road for the Everton-Liverpool derby at Goodison Park on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1967, with a delayed k.o. time: 'The late kick-off and the television has been given the blessing of the Football Association and the Football League, and the Liverpool police and transport chief have also approved', *The Times*, 24 February 1967 (8d).

<sup>45</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1447/9 – 27 April 1966, Loftus to Cowgill.

<sup>46</sup> *The Times*, 22 July 1966 (12g).



The agreement between the FA and the BBC for ‘filming and/or recording excerpts from F.A. Cup Matches in the 1966/67’ was signed in January 1967. The core of the agreement was the recognition of a rota system between the BBC and ITV, with Saturday showings reserved to the former and Sundays to the latter. The BBC could film and/or record matches in the FA Cup strictly adhering to the following regulations: they could cover up to three matches in each round of the competition from the third to the fifth inclusive, two matches in the sixth round, and one semi-final; that they could transmit excerpts of each round up to a total length of 45 minutes; that these TV broadcasts could be only on Saturdays and not before 10pm. The fee was £1,000 per round plus a facility fee of £100 to the home ground clubs<sup>47</sup>.

### **Mind the gap**

Given that competitive negotiations had led the BBC and ITV to a sort of stalemate, the difference had to be made directly on the pitch. At the BBC it was then decided that quality of football programming had to be of a higher standard than in the past, and especially for those games that were shared along with their competitor. The FA Cup Final had to become a kind of a showdown. Therefore, for the 1966 FA Cup Final things were prepared with style. A special edition of *Grandstand* brought pictures from Wembley to the viewers already four hours before kick-off, with David Coleman setting the scene and special guest Bobby Moore telling how a player feels during the walk through the tunnel leading to the

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<sup>47</sup> See BBC WAC, R30/4426/2 – 5 January 1967, ‘Agreement between the FA and the BBC for filming...’.

pitch. And there were specials dedicated to the arrival of the supporters at Wembley Stadium, interviews with the players of the two teams (Everton and Sheffield Wednesday), recorded at the hotels on the very morning of the game, in which they were asked what they had eaten for breakfast, which movie they had watched the evening before, and what kind of tension they felt before playing such an important game.

Brian Moore, ITV football commentator, will recall those days of 'Cup Final War' as follows:

'They opened up at 11.30 am, so we started at 11.15; next year we started at 11.15, and they came forward to 11 o'clock; next year they'd move the start time to 10.45 – and we'd beat them by having Dickie Davies smiling into the cameras at 10.30. The way it was going, there was a real danger of us delivering Cup Final Cornflakes.'<sup>48</sup>.

This policy of day-long coverage was to be maintained on a regular basis in the years to come until nowadays. That blanket coverage of Cup Final day, though, was not generally welcome by all viewers, and sometimes caused some complaint, like the one of a special correspondent of *The Times*:

'The prime argument against such massive coverage is that it tends to deaden rather than heighten the sense of occasion. Any glamour still surrounding a Cup Final footballer is lost as soon as we have seen him sitting on an hotel lawn in shirt-sleeves talking about his breakfast. Also, the bigger the build-up, the greater the risk of the match itself seeming an anticlimax – though, thankfully, this year's game was superbly exciting. And where, finally, does the mammoth coverage stop? Shall we next year be joining the players after their morning shave? Perhaps it might be an idea if they were given a little more privacy and the viewer less irrelevant information.'<sup>49</sup>.

The gap between BBC and ITV coverage of football was quite clear, and obviously in favour of the Corporation. The Corporation's twenty-year lead was

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<sup>48</sup> Moore, Brian, *The Final Score. The Autobiography of the Voice of Football*, London: 2000, p. 94.

<sup>49</sup> *The Times*, 21 May 1966 (15e).



still in force, also thanks to ITV's structure based on regional franchises, which made it very 'difficult to formulate a coherent sports policy', as noted by Barnett, because 'different regions had different sporting priorities, which militated against a determined and co-ordinated stand against the BBC'<sup>50</sup>.

Therefore programming of sports by ITV was not challenging by any chance the BBC, which had established 'an apparently unbeatable lead over Independent television in sports programmes'<sup>51</sup>, especially since the special 'Sports Programmes' section had been set up.

### **The world of ITV sport**

One demonstration of the inferiority of ITV in the field of sport television broadcasting was the partial failure of the project to compete with BBC's Saturday afternoon sport programming, characterised by *Grandstand*. In autumn 1964 ITV presented the brand new *World of Sport*, produced by ABC, in association with ATV, and introduced by former BBC journalist Eamonn Andrews (before 1965 ITV had placed Saturday afternoon sport broadcasts in a disjointed manner and not on a regular basis, alternating with showings of feature films). But, as in John Bromley's words (Bromley would become Executive Producer of Sports at ITV in the years to come), 'the cupboard looked pretty bare'<sup>52</sup>. The programme showed a great variety of less common sports, such as American and Gaelic football, hurling, canoe slalom, bowling, snooker, darts,

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<sup>50</sup> Barnett, 'Sport...', p. 89.

<sup>51</sup> *The Times*, 4 July 1966 (10g).

<sup>52</sup> Quoted in *ITV: Guide to Independent Television – 1976*, p. 74.

and, most notoriously, wrestling<sup>53</sup>, given that the BBC maintained their exclusive long-term contracts with the governing bodies of the most popular sports. Therefore, due to the poor appeal of its contents, it was not a surprise if as early as in 1966 news broke in the press that

Associated Television, London's weekend television company is thinking of reducing its sporting programmes on Saturday afternoons. It is understood a proposal was made at an Independent Television Authority "Consultation" on sporting programmes in London last week that the company should show recorded sports programmes on Sunday afternoons, with less sport on Saturday.<sup>54</sup>

According to the new plan, ATV's Saturday sport would be reduced to some horseracing, with other minor items, in the early afternoon. The aim of this move was to restore ATV's audience ratings for Saturday through the showing of adventure programmes, abandoning serious sport to the BBC<sup>55</sup>.

That plan, though, did not go that far. In the first week of August the Independent Television Authority decided to forbid ATV to schedule programmes other than sports on Saturday afternoons, saying that 'they were going to put to the companies their own ideas for reorganizing Saturday afternoon sport'<sup>56</sup>. These 'ideas' were revealed just the day after. The core of the project was the setting up of a central sports unit to do all commercial television's sports seven days a week instead of the 14 ITV companies negotiating their own contracts for sporting events. According to ITA chairman, Lord Hill, the solution of the central sports unit would put Independent Television 'in a better bargaining position for

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<sup>53</sup> The popular success of professional wrestling was huge, 'but this was a tussle between sport and show business in which the latter generally came out on top. Among some of the combatants the acting was as bad as anything seen on *Crossroads*', Crisell, *An Introductory History...*, p. 122.

<sup>54</sup> *The Times*, 29 June 1966 (11g).

<sup>55</sup> Pop music programme *Countdown* and adventure series *Danger Man* were the programmes in charge of this 'rescue'.

<sup>56</sup> *The Times*, 2 August 1966 (9d).



televising big events', and the central unit, which was comparable to ITN for the news, could give 'an identity to Independent television sport that has always been lacking by comparison with the B.B.C.'<sup>57</sup>.

Plans for the setting up of such a unit actually had already been drawn up by a Sports Working Party, set up by the Network Planning Committee, as early as 1964. This Working Party recommended the setting up of a 'Central Sports Team' which would acquire and present all the network's sport on a seven-day basis. But after ABC started the production of *World of Sport*, it seemed it was enough to boost televising of sport, and the Network Planning Committee decided not to adopt the plan. The question of sports policy was reopened in February 1966, to end up with Lord Hill's decision; a decision discussed and finally accepted by all ITV companies.

Discussion on the matter followed in the press. Very instructive was this leading article published in *The Times*, which also faces the whole question of televised sport:

'(...) Is football to be regarded as a minority interest that needs to be encouraged, like chamber music, for cultural reasons? The explanation is simple. Apart from a few great occasions, sport does not as a rule attract vast audiences on television – and in televising sport commercial television is very often outclassed by the B.B.C. To do better, independent television will need to concentrate more effort on sport.

The success of sport on television cannot be judged on purely statistical grounds. There are the obvious advantages. Television enables sports enthusiasts to keep up their interest at an age when they can no longer travel far to attend. It has brought some sports to the notice of a completely new public. (...).

The experts will always differ about how much real appreciation of a sport can be gained on television. Obviously something of the atmosphere of the occasion must be lost. The excitement of the commentator can never make up for the sense of being part of the crowd. But the viewer before the screen can often see more of the details of play than the average spectator in the

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<sup>57</sup> *The Times*, 3 August 1966 (10a).

grandstand. What he sometimes lacks is the full awareness of what is taking place in parts of the field nearby (...). One can generally see a good tackle in football better than a piece of clever positional play. But these are small criticisms. Better sport on television than not at all.’<sup>58</sup>.

It took more than four months before the first steps towards the direction indicated by Lord Hill were seen, though; and when it happened it appeared immediately clear that the unit ‘will be much less powerful than the unit proposed last August’ and that ‘real power remains with the companies’<sup>59</sup>. According to the new outline, the unit would begin to operate in the coming months, and would be headed by a Director of sport, in charge of planning comprehensive network coverage of national and international events, receiving full powers within the approved Budget to negotiate and secure contracts with relevant sporting bodies. But, given that in June 1967 the unit had not turned up yet, the press reported that

‘(...) some people are beginning to doubt whether it will come into being at all. (...). Meanwhile, the B.B.C. signs long-term contracts with sport organizing committees – and Independent television makes much of wrestling and indoor football.’<sup>60</sup>.

Eventually, in September 1967, John McMillan, after 12 years with Independent Television (he had been associated with many sport broadcasts such as the Tokyo Olympics, and already deputy chairman of the BBC/ITV 1966 World Cup consortium), was appointed Chairman of the Network Sports Sub-Committee. On 30<sup>th</sup> July 1968 he formally assumed responsibility for co-ordinating the central planning of the programming of sports of the entire network and for negotiating TV rights with sport organisations with the title of

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<sup>58</sup> *The Times*, 4 August 1966 (11a).

<sup>59</sup> *The Times*, 30 December 1966 (9f).

<sup>60</sup> *The Times*, 19 June 1967 (2g).



Director of Sport<sup>61</sup>. As Bernard Sendall writes, after more than 12 years of existence 'one of ITV's long-standing areas of weakness was at least on the way to attaining the robust health necessary to confront the BBC in the ongoing competitive struggle'<sup>62</sup>.

The first result of the new Unit was the acquisition of TV rights for the League Cup, only a few days after McMillan's appointment. In 1968 a new company, London Weekend Television (LWT), took over the weekend contract in London and assumed direct responsibility for the production, presentation and editorial control of *World of Sports*. Although, as pinpointed by other companies of the network, advertising revenue was falling, and the predominantly male audience of the programme were of little commercial value. LWT, backed by the position of the Authority, which considered the televising of sport on Saturday afternoon was the 'key to status and achievement of Independent Television in the field of sport'<sup>63</sup>, held on. In the autumn of 1969 it was decided, as a consequence of those critics, that the Saturday afternoon programme would be radically reshaped, with the introduction of a comprehensive racing service entitled *They're Off* (which would change name to *The ITV Seven* in 1973) running uninterrupted from 1.20 to 3.10pm, followed by *International Sports Special*, a 45-minute programme 'designed to offer a range of sports, many of them of relatively minor interest, wide enough to appeal to a multitude of tastes'; then there was an hour of

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<sup>61</sup> He would resign 'by mutual agreement' in July 1971. See *The Times*, 10 July 1971 (3b). For more detailed information on the setting up of the central unit see: Sendall, *Expansion and Change...*, pp. 238-244; and Potter, *Independent Television...*, pp. 277-283.

<sup>62</sup> Sendall, *Independent Television...*, p. 244.

<sup>63</sup> Quotation from Potter, *Independent Television...*, p. 278.

professional wrestling. Soccer contribution to the programme was at the beginning, with *On the Ball*, and at the end, with the round-up of results<sup>64</sup>.

In 1970 an amount of 9.5 hours of sport broadcasts per week, representing 13% of the whole ITV programming, was recorded<sup>65</sup>, with about a 30% increase in respect to 1966, before the Sport Unit were set up, and more than 150% increase in respect to 1956, when only 5% of the whole programming was devoted to sport.

At least, now there was a real competitor for the BBC OB Sports department, and it would do nothing but improve the quality of the general production of televised sport in Britain. In May 1970 Tom Margerison, Chief Executive of LWT, could affirm:

‘(...) ITV’s sports coverage in many fields, notably soccer, is now generally considered to be as good as, or better than, the BBC’s. Commentators like Jimmy Hill and Brian Moore cannot be matched by the BBC for quality of interpretation and reporting.’<sup>66</sup>.

Margerison’s point of view was not exempt from partisanship, of course; but there must have been something true in its words, if we consider that they would be shared also by Walter Winterbottom, Director of the Sports Council, when in November 1970 he wrote to Walter M. Schwab, the officer of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in charge of Sport and Physical Recreation, that

‘(...) at the present time London Weekend are able to maintain a good professional staff who are able to present sports programmes offering strong competition to the BBC.’<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> The schedule of the programme could slightly change from time to time, with the split of *International Sports Special* in two or more chunks spread throughout the afternoon depending on the events scheduled each Saturday.

<sup>65</sup> Source: *ITV: Guide to Independent Television – 1978*.

<sup>66</sup> *The Times*, 15 May 1970 (11c).

<sup>67</sup> TNA, HLG 120/1304 – 10 November 1970, Winterbottom to Schwab.



Winterbottom's blessing was a very important acknowledgment for ITV, being the former England manager one of the most relevant personalities in the world of football.

The 'McMillan years' took along with them also a series of new successful programmes that would be on-air for many years: ABC's *Results Round-Up* on Saturday afternoons for the 1967-68 football season; *On the Ball*, the weekly Saturday lunchtime football round-up introduced by Brian Moore and shown as part of *World of Sport*, from 1969 until 1985<sup>68</sup>; and, above all the others, LWT's *The Big Match* in 1968-69.

After *MOTD* had established a virtually unchallenged leadership in televised football, suddenly in 1968 LWT, propelled by fresh money coming from the acquisition of a share in the company by emerging Australian tycoon Rupert Murdoch, launched an ambitious Sunday afternoon programme featuring more or less *MOTD*'s format of League football highlights: *The Big Match*. Before *The Big Match* was broadcast nationwide by ITV, there were already several programmes of football highlights on commercial television, but they were broadcast on a regional basis only. The oldest ones were Anglia's *Match of the Week*, Tyne Tees's *Shoot!*, and Scottish Television's *Scotsport*, scheduled as early as in 1962; then, in the second half of the Sixties and in the Seventies, came ABC's *World of Soccer*, Southern Television's *Southern Soccer*, ATV's *Star Soccer*, Granada's *Kick-Off Match*, and Yorkshire's *Football Special*, all of them being broadcast on Sunday afternoon (Harlech Television covered local football

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<sup>68</sup> The show was revived from the beginning of the 1998/99 season, but was then dropped when ITV lost the rights to Premiership highlights to the BBC.

too, but on a non-regular basis)<sup>69</sup>. This dispersed programming of football was anything but the reflection of the divided approach to football by commercial television companies; therefore *The Big Match* represented a move towards unity and in the direction of a more consistent approach to football.

To present the new football highlights programme, ITV contracted Jimmy Hill, former Coventry City manager and, especially, former PFA Chairman in the late '50s (he had successfully campaigned to have the League's £20 maximum wage scrapped). Hill was supported by former BBC Radio's football correspondent Brian Moore, the 'Voice of Football'. Hill's approach to the presentation of football on TV brought a new skill, based on the analysis of tactics and drawing attention to good performances and/or blunders by players and officials. This gave an extra-boost to the launch of the new programme, which, though, would be a long way behind the audience figures of *MOTD*.

Despite the drive for improvement in the televising of sport at ITV, the BBC had established a set of expectations among the viewers in terms of coverage and quality of production that the commercial television was not able to meet yet. And the BBC's lead was fuelled by some incidents confirming fears and prejudices towards a broadcasting network driven by money and 'too insensitive to the

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<sup>69</sup> The format was more or less the same for all those programmes, with about 30 minutes (in some special occasions they could last up to 55 minutes) of highlights featuring just the one local match that had taken place on the previous day, often irrespective of quality and division of the teams. The first League match to have highlights shown on commercial television was Ipswich Town-Wolverhampton Wanderers on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1962, with the Wolves securing a 3-2 away victory before Anglia Television's cameras. According to John Bourn, Anglia paid the League just £1,000 after a special agreement had been reached for the exclusive rights to recorded highlights of 30 games involving four East Anglia clubs (Ipswich, Norwich, Peterborough and Colchester). See: Bourn, John, 'The history of regional coverage on ITV', in *When Saturday Comes*, October 2002.



integrity of a sporting occasion to sustain full coverage to the end'<sup>70</sup>, such as when in 1968 the exciting last over of the Gillette Cup, the prestigious one-day cricket tournament, was cut because ITV had ran out of time and had to screen some commercials.

### Staying 'no-live'

After the contract for 1966/67 football season had been signed, a situation with only recorded highlights of football was something that television people could not stand for a long time. No surprise, therefore, if already in March 1967 a new effort was moved by the BBC to the League to get exclusive rights for live and recorded League football. And this time the bid was a 'serious' one. On 14<sup>th</sup> March 1967 all the newspapers reported the news that a total bid of £781,000 had been proposed to the League by the Corporation.

The offer was split in different section:

- £630,000 were offered for 35 matches for exclusive live transmission on Thursday evenings from August 24 to May 16<sup>71</sup>;
- £120,000 for 30 matches to be recorded for *Match of the Day*;
- £25,000 for live television of the League Cup Final;
- £6,000 a year would go to the League Management Committee to cover administrative expenses.

This was the biggest offer ever made for TV football so far, and given the extraordinary amount of money of the bid, this time it would be a very difficult one to reject, at least in the BBC's opinion.

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<sup>70</sup> Barnett, 'Sport...' , p. 90.

<sup>71</sup> 20 First Division fixtures, 5 Second Division, 4 League Cup ties, 6 European Cups games or representative matches.

ITV's people were caught by surprise. They, who had always been the first ones to go out and trying to make the breakthrough for live television of League Football, this time played the role that in the past had been the BBC's one.

'Independent television are opposed to the live broadcasting of football, but say that if the football authorities decide to change their policy they should be given the opportunity to acquire a share of the new rights. In a letter to the League Independent television say: "When the football authorities banned live television of matches two years ago we were very concerned. However, it is now our opinion, based on experience in the intervening period, that this decision has been in the best interests of the game. Investigations we have made among viewers prove that live television unquestionably keeps spectators away from grounds. They feel that the interests of both sides are best met by a continuation of the ban on live television, but approval for recordings. It is suggested that under a revised scale for recordings the fee could be increased to nearly £300,000. This is more than double the present £132,860 paid jointly by Independent Television and the B.B.C.'<sup>72</sup>.

It was the world upside down! The BBC offering a lot of money for live television of football, ITV saying that in the best interest of the game the ban on live television should remain in force...

The first reactions from the clubs were apparently negative. Bob Lord, Chairman of Burnley, for instance, said that 'television is a possible cancer on the game'; and Bob Wall, Secretary of Arsenal, backed his colleague affirming that he was 'dead against television in principle'<sup>73</sup>. The use of such a gloomy vocabulary ('cancer', 'dead') is particularly indicative of the attitude of many clubs towards that new attempt by the BBC, and television in general. But this time not everyone at the League was sharing that point of view; and,

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<sup>72</sup> *The Times*, 14 March 1967. At the same time there was a third offer from 'Viewsport Ltd' for an experiment of 12 selected matches to be transmitted back to the ground of the team playing away from home at a fee of £36,000.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*



notwithstanding that opposition, many other clubs favoured the proposals, particularly the one on special Thursday night games.

The matter was discussed in an informal meeting of the clubs to be held in London on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1967. At the meeting, despite the vast amount of money put forward by TV organisations, the clubs rejected the offer for live television with an ‘overwhelming majority’, reaffirming ‘the clubs’ longstanding opposition to live broadcasts, which they regard as a threat to match attendances’<sup>74</sup>.

During the same meeting discussion over a new scale of fees for recordings was deferred to a new meeting to be held in the future. At the end of the day, not only did TV broadcasters get no live League football at all, but, thanks to their competitive and different offers, they were now to afford a considerable increase of fees to have recorded highlights.

Nothing changed in the following months, as can be understood by reading what was reported on the press in December 1967:

‘The Football League’s attitude towards live television in 1968 remains the same – it cannot be contemplated, states the recent issue of the *Football League Review*. The article says: “Last spring specially called meetings of the clubs found only three voices in favour. There is no reason to suppose opinion has changed. This season there will be no live telecasting of League games, cup games, or internationals – with the exception of the F.A. Cup Final.”<sup>75</sup>

The only development, as far as negotiations were concerned, regarded the renewal of the agreement for live televising of the FA Cup Final, one of the few matches to be televised live in the near future. Negotiations started as early as July 1967, during a meeting of the Sub-Committee, where £40,000 were asked jointly

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<sup>74</sup> *The Times*, 4 April 1967 (3a). The offer by ‘Viewsport Ltd’ was rejected too.

<sup>75</sup> *The Times*, 29 December 1967 (12e).

to the BBC and ITV for the 1968 Final<sup>76</sup>, and lasted until January, when a joint statement by the FA, the BBC, and ITV declared that ‘agreement has been reached for “live” television coverage of the F.A. Cup final for the next three years’<sup>77</sup>, at a fee of £40,000 for each final. At least the pain for the increase of the fee had been softened by the signing of a mid-term contract.

A key role in the problematic relations between television and football authorities in the second half of the Sixties kept being the issue of attendances. Throughout the '60s (save 1967/68 season<sup>78</sup>) attendances never reached the figures of the Forties and Fifties, which were always beyond 30 million spectators per year; and lower divisions were the ones suffering the most<sup>79</sup>. The victory of England in the 1966 World Cup had revived the interest in the game for a little while, after that the lowest total attendance ever for League matches had been experienced in 1965/66, with a total figure of 27,206,960. But the positive trend lasted just two seasons. Of course football authorities kept putting the blame of the negative trend of attendances on competition from television, yet again; but the reasons had to be sought elsewhere, e.g. in the cost of tickets. A survey made by the Opinion Research Council for the *London Evening Standard* early in the '70s spotted the rising prices of admission to the grounds as one of the three main reasons for football's declining crowds, the other two being hooliganism and the

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<sup>76</sup> ‘And the BBC a further £5,000 for the Eurovision rights or £400 per country, whichever was the greater’, BBC WAC, R30/4426/2 – 19 July 1967, ‘TV/Radio Sub-Committee – Minutes of a meeting’.

<sup>77</sup> *The Times*, 24 January 1968 (2h).

<sup>78</sup> The 1967/68 season was the only one since 1959/60 when attendances reached 30m (30,107,298).

<sup>79</sup> See: Mason, ‘Football...’, p. 165; and Monnington, *British Sport...*, p. 54.



lack of skill and excitement in the modern game<sup>80</sup>. From mid Sixties onward there were drastic increases in the price of tickets: if until 1964/65 season minimum admission at the grounds had been 12½p, in 1965/66 it was 20p, with a 60% increase (and in 1970/71 it reached 30p: 2½ times more than five years before). It cannot be just a case if the most dramatic decreases of attendances were experienced each time there was an increase of cost of tickets:

- 1951/52 (7½p min. admission): 39,015,866 > 1952/53 (8½p): 37,149,966
- 1954/55 (8½p): 34,133,103 > 1955/56 (10p): 32,744,809
- 1959/60 (10p): 32,538,611 > 1960/61 (12½p): 28,619,754
- 1964/65 (12½p): 27,641,168 > 1965/66 (20p): 27,206,960
- 1967/68 (20p): 30,107,298 > 1968/69 (25p): 29,382,172
- 1969/70 (25p): 29,600,972 > 1970/71 (30p): 28,194,146<sup>81</sup>.

Nonetheless, in September 1968 both the League and the FA, despite paying ‘tribute to the public relation job done by the television companies through their filmed highlights of games at weekends’, manifested their own ideas on the detrimental effect of televised football with other matches being played at the same time:

‘No one could blame the spectator for preferring free entertainment on television, but his absence from the terrace was in no way compensated for by fees from television companies, says the League Review. “In the final analysis, live television is a killer to any spectator sport”, it claims.’<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> Quoted in Monnington, *British Sport...*, p. 55.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>82</sup> *The Times*, 6 September 1968 (15f).

Live television was the enemy, live television was not to be allowed. There were, of course, dissonant voices, especially coming from the FA, as usual. It must not be that surprising, for instance, if in the very same August, FA President Lord Harewood was quoted as saying:

‘TV has done more than people are prepared to admit. I wish more money was coming into football from television to make it worth while to take the risk (...). I would be prepared to see live television, even on Saturday.’<sup>83</sup>.

The FA and the League were still not sharing either the language or the approach to the whole matter of television. But, unfortunately for TV companies, this assessment would not be of any use in order to change things in near future, given that the FA had no power at all on League football. Regular live television of Saturday football would be still a chimera.

### The longer, the better

When the time came to renew the existing agreement between television and football authorities in 1969, both the BBC and ITV were only willing to renew the current agreement, and went just for recorded highlights. Thus the BBC signed the contract with the League for *MOTD* highlights in April (at a fee of £100,000 per 45 minutes per Saturday of recorded highlights of League matches)<sup>84</sup>, and in July with the FA for some England internationals’ recordings not to exceed 45 minutes in their edited form (at a fee of £7,500 per match)<sup>85</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> Quoted in Dimmock, *Television Outside...*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>84</sup> See BBC WAC, T42/32 – 28 April 1969, ‘Agreement between the Football League Ltd and the British...’.

<sup>85</sup> See BBC WAC, T42/29/1 – 3 July 1969, ‘Exclusive Agreement for Television of International Association Football...’.



At about the same time, ITV experienced its own troubles in relations with the FA. The FA, after having displayed a positive attitude towards the commercial organisation for quite a long while, affirmed that any bid by commercial television for televising highlights of the forthcoming England internationals would not even be taken in consideration

‘because an I.T.V. company announced the live screening of the home counties championship last season some three weeks before it should have done, thus breaking an agreement with the Football Association’<sup>86</sup>.

If on the one hand ITV were having this clash with the FA, the BBC was about to start quite a harsh row with the League, with a personal battle between Peter Dimmock and Alan Hardaker that began in spring 1970. Everything was initially caused by the decision by the football authorities not to permit the televising of an FA Cup semi-final second replay<sup>87</sup>. The reason for this decision had been explained to the press by Hardaker:

‘Television has eaten its ration of football this week – forty-five minutes of the first replay on Monday night. I know it’s annoying for people who would like to watch the game, but we have no intention of bending the rules. Too many sports have been ruined by allowing TV to run them. That won’t happen to football.’<sup>88</sup>.

After this declaration (it has been impossible to find out what sports ‘ruined’ by TV Hardaker refers to) the League received some ‘nasty correspondence’ that all made Hardaker the ‘villain of the piece’, putting the blame on him only for the non-televising of the game. Hardaker phoned Sam Leitch, *Match of the Day*’s editor, to make some ‘very angry and abusive remarks’. He was quoted to have said that the BBC, when asked whether the match would be televised, should have

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<sup>86</sup> *The Times*, 14 August 1969 (5h).

<sup>87</sup> The match was Leeds United-Manchester United, played at Bolton on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1970.

<sup>88</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 26 March 1970.

said that the match was not to be televised, not leaving him and the League in the difficult situation of looking like the bad guys that did not want it on TV. He also added that in his opinion 'Dimmock was behind it all', emphasising that he would be 'very tough with the BBC in the next twelve months'. Then, before slamming down the receiver, he 'rudely' informed Leitch that he would no longer be available for any of the forthcoming World Cup commentaries he had been invited to and that as far as *Sportsnight* was concerned on April 9<sup>th</sup>, Leitch 'could stick Kop Choir in a certain place!'<sup>89</sup>.

It was definitely not a good moment for the BBC to have an argument with Hardaker, given that they were in the middle of the negotiations for the 'Match of the Day Agreement' for the 1970-71 season. The very next day after the phone call between Hardaker and Leitch, Hardaker tried to have a telephone conversation with Bryan Cowgill, but he did not manage to get him on the phone, having to talk to Jack Oaten instead. During the phone call, Hardaker complained again about the way the BBC had behaved, threatening that 'he was considering whether he would make a public statement'<sup>90</sup>, and saying yet again that Dimmock had been the man behind the entire row. On the same day Bryan Cowgill, having been made aware of the situation, wrote a personal letter to Hardaker, 'as a friend, of you personally and of the League professionally', hoping to let him reconsider the whole situation 'in fairness'. In this letter Cowgill explained how things had gone according to the BBC, saying that their decision of trying to get the opportunity to show pictures of that particular game, despite the weekly amount

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<sup>89</sup> See BBC WAC, T42/32 – 1 April 1970, 'Alan Hardaker'.

<sup>90</sup> BBC WAC, T42/32 – 2 April 1970, 'Record of telephone conversation with Mr. Alan Hardaker...'.



of football had already been reached, had been caused by the 'exceptionally heavy volume of enquiries from Press and Public', and that the same thing had happened to ITV. He also added that, during all the enquiries made by the press on the question, 'at no time was the Football League mentioned' by them<sup>91</sup>.

Luckily, the harsh misunderstanding did not affect negotiations on the agreement for recording League matches in the 1970-71 season, which was signed on 30<sup>th</sup> April<sup>92</sup>. Hardaker maintained a suspicious attitude at least until November. On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, he had an informal dinner with Jack Oaten at the Great Western Hotel. During the dinner they watched the Rugby League match between Hull and Hull Kingston Rovers on BBC2, and Hardaker 'talked and talked'. As reported by Oaten to Cowgill, the discussion was mainly focused on the matter of television in general and of the BBC in particular, with the opening gambit being that 'once again he had caught us out in a breach of contract – showing the Toshack goal out of our Welsh Regional match'. During the discussion, Hardaker indicated how ITV's methods showed 'less breaching of contract, more amenable regard for League directions and requests and less argument before accepting restrictions'<sup>93</sup>. It was not a good period for the BBC. Apart from this row with the League, ITV had managed to get exclusive rights for recorded highlights of the League Cup,

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<sup>91</sup> See BBC WAC, T42/32 – 2 April 1970, Cowgill to Hardaker.

<sup>92</sup> Main points of the agreement were: the BBC would be allowed to show edited highlights of two League matches up to 45 minutes (30+15) for 30 Saturdays between August 15th 1970 and May 31st 1971 after 10pm; highlights of a third match would be televised only for Wales; a rota system of first choice of the matches month by month would be granted to the BBC (alternatively with ITV's *Big Match* on Sunday); the fee for the above facilities would be £103,000. See BBC WAC, T42/32 – 30 April 1970, 'Agreement between the Football League Ltd and the British...'.

<sup>93</sup> BBC WAC, T42/32 – 4 November 1970, 'Meeting with Alan Hardaker'.

and the FA had sold exclusive rights for the Charity Shield to commercial television, too.

Negotiation for the following season between football and the two television services started in spring 1971 and ended in July, with an agreement for edited recorded highlights of League matches that, for the first time, was on a long-term basis: three football seasons. There had been an increase in terms of fees, being now £120,000 per year instead of £103,000 as in the past season; but the long-term basis guaranteed no further increases at least up to 1974. The agreement consisted mainly of a confirmation of the previous one, with 45 minutes of edited highlights on Saturday's *Match of the Day* for the BBC and Sunday's *Big Match* for ITV<sup>94</sup>. As discussed in a previous meeting early in July, no ban was imposed on television companies regarding slow motions and comments on controversial incidents ('BBC and ITV take note of the Football League's concern that referees should not be unfairly exposed to public ridicule as a result of television coverage') as well as on interviews to players or managers ('The League and the clubs already have the right to refuse permission for any of their employees to discuss a match after transmission. This has always been accepted by BBC and ITV'<sup>95</sup>).

If all the other expenses for all the other football match highlights of the season are considered (FA Cup *Match of the Day*: £22,500; midweek football based on Internationals, FA Cup replays, League Cup games, European competitions for clubs: £60,000) along with those for the rare live broadcasts (FA

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<sup>94</sup> See BBC WAC, T42/32 – 22 July 1971, 'Agreement between the Football League Ltd and the British...'.  
<sup>95</sup> BBC WAC, T42/32 – 5 July 1971, 'Football negotiations'.



Cup Final: £25,000; Home internationals: £65,000; Watney Cup<sup>96</sup>: £17,500; European competitions' finals at a fee to be negotiated time by time<sup>97</sup>), the total amount of money spent in a single season of football by the BBC would be in the region of £300,000<sup>98</sup>. This was, more or less, the same amount of money spent by ITV, in the light of the fact that both the BBC and ITV had the same kind of coverage.

### **A dangerous toy**

Having a long-term agreement been signed so early for three years to come, the main trouble in the 1971-72 season came from controversy between the League and the BBC regarding the way commentators did their job. In talking on the matter, Hardaker let Cowgill 'officially' know in October 1971 that 'more and more Clubs are hardening their attitude to television' and that it was time 'for a really frank discussion about the future of television in football, before the balloon goes up'<sup>99</sup>. The letter was written on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, and it should have been an alarm bell for the TV commentators. But on 30<sup>th</sup> October, after the commentary of Manchester United-Leeds United, BBC's David Coleman was accused by the League of having 'discussed certain decisions which had been made by the referee

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<sup>96</sup> The 'Watney Mann Invitation Cup' (normally referred to as simply the 'Watney Cup') was a short-lived tournament held between 1970 and 1973 before the start of the normal season, and was contested by the teams that had scored the most goals in each of the four divisions of the Football League the previous season, two from each division taking part. Notably, it was the first football competition in the world where penalty shootouts were used to settle tied matches. The tournament had been named after the 'Watney Mann' brewery, which had signed a sponsorship deal with the League.

<sup>97</sup> It was about £15,000 per European Champions Cup Finals. See BBC WAC T42/30/1 – 23 February 1972, 'Football Fees'.

<sup>98</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/32 – 5 July 1971, 'Football negotiations'.

<sup>99</sup> BBC WAC, T42/32/1 – 23 October 1971, Hardaker to Cowgill.

during the game and illustrated his commentary by the use of slow play-backs'. This behaviour, according to the League, was 'a flagrant breach of the agreement'<sup>100</sup>.

The BBC tried to demonstrate that Coleman had not in any way attacked the referee, and that he had 'posed simply a refereeing dilemma because the laws are confusing'<sup>101</sup>. They also replied, in the person of Bryan Cowgill that

'it is a frustrating situation on the one hand to be accused of breaking the agreement by fair comment last week and to be accused in other quarters this week of suppressing foul play on behalf of referees in matches at West Ham and Hull! The truth is that very serious efforts are being made to reflect fairly and honestly the significant moments of the matches that we cover at Football League grounds, at the same time respecting the League's concern for its match officials.'<sup>102</sup>

The problem with slow-motion and its utilisation, which could jeopardise referees' authority, was born even earlier than the day the slow-motion machine was invented by the BBC's Design department for the 1966 World Cup. Already in 1951, the idea that the eye of the television camera allowed the viewer to spot particulars of the incidents that occurred during the game which were impossible to be spotted by the referee was clear, as OB producer Craxton wrote to commentator Jewell:

'(...) I am sorry that we were not able to telefilm it and to invite the referee along to see the error of his ways. It would have been most instructive! There is no doubt that very often we see more than the referee does. Not only in football but in cricket I can foresee occasions when umpires or referees may be put in a spot by giving what are clearly wrong decisions at vital moments (...)'<sup>103</sup>.

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<sup>100</sup> BBC WAC, T42/32/1 – 3 November 1971, Hardaker to Cowgill.

<sup>101</sup> BBC WAC, T42/32 – 8 November 1971, Leitch to Cowgill.

<sup>102</sup> BBC WAC, T42/32 – 8 November 1971, Cowgill to Hardaker.

<sup>103</sup> BBC WAC, T14/93/12 – 18 December 1951, Craxton to Jewell.



The only limits, at that time, were represented by the impossibility of recording pictures being shot live by TV cameras (the first 'Ampex' video tape recorder would be invented not earlier than 1956 in the US, and its first utilisation in Europe would be in 1958<sup>104</sup>). Therefore, when it was possible to record pictures being broadcast live, and it was also possible to play them back in a few instants, it seemed natural to use this new facility as much as possible.

If on the one hand the slow-motion machine had soon become a necessary instrument for a better comprehension of the game on TV, gathering general appreciation by the viewers, on the other hand it opened a new fount of possible controversy about the way games were refereed. This danger was clear to almost everybody at the FA and at the League. Even Stanley Rous, then President of the FIFA, who had always been friendly to television and open to novelties, expressed his fears of the utilisation that could be made of the new device, as reported by Paulu:

'Sir Stanley wrote that instant replays in slow motion, if accompanied by highly critical analysis, are not "conducive to good discipline on the field nor to the health of the game – in many cases it is positively harmful".'<sup>105</sup>

That point of view was shared by some of the audience too, as testified by this letter that a viewer, Mr E. Wood, sent to the BBC in August 1968:

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<sup>104</sup> The 'Quadruplex' system of videotape recording by American company Ampex was developed and released for the broadcast television industry in 1956. This new format revolutionised television broadcast operations and production, replacing the system of film recording, which was much more costly, of lower quality, and taking time to develop as well. The first magnetically-recorded time-delayed network television programme using the Ampex recording system was in the US on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1956 (CBS's *Douglas Edwards and the News*). For further information on the history of technological developments of television see: Hilmes, Michele/Jacobs, Jason (eds.), *The Television History Book*, London: 2003; Pawley, Edward, *BBC Engineering 1922-1972*, London: 1972; Smith, Anthony (ed.), *Television. An International History*, Oxford: 1998.

<sup>105</sup> Paulu, *Television and Radio...*, p. 323.

‘I have become disturbed by the coverage of the game by Television, and in particular by the new facility which enables the film to be “played back”. If there happens to be an occasion during the game when there is some doubt about some decision, there is the inevitable “play back”. It is possible that we may be shown, some time in the future, that a penalty award should not have been given, by showing that the offence actually occurred outside the penalty area. The referee has to give his decision on the spot with no second thought. To me, this is to be deprecated, and in the interests of the game as a whole, ought to be discontinued.’<sup>106</sup>.

And in 1969 a reader of the *Football League Review*, Mr A. Hawkins, complained quite harshly about this new machine and, especially, of the way it was used by the BBC:

‘How justify their slowmotion camera play-backs of incidents on the soccer pitch which prove the referee wrong? Not only does this undermine the authority of a man whose absolute authority is vital if the game is to continue as the top sport we all know, but it pillories an official who has to make a split-second decision. So acute has this judgement to be, please note, that 99 times out of a hundred the ultra-clever commentator doesn’t dare to cast an opinion until he has seen the play-back. Are the BBC trying to act as judge and jury?’<sup>107</sup>.

Bryan Cowgill, to whom the League forwarded the above mentioned letter by Mr Hawkins, replied soon after that for no reason the BBC was trying to undermine referees’ authority and ability, and that, on the contrary, slow-motion served ‘to underline just how well they do’. In his defence of slow-motion, Cowgill noted how playbacks were very helpful in allowing the viewers to better appreciate either an outstanding move or a crucial decision, and to deprive them of ‘the genuine insights that modern television can provide’ would be unfair. Besides he highlighted how ‘to deny the responsible use of these methods – and they are responsibly used – smacks to me a form [*sic*] of censorship that we don’t go in for in this country, where matters of public interest are concerned’, adding

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<sup>106</sup> BBC WAC, R30/4426/1 – 8 August 1968, Mr E. Wood to the BBC.

<sup>107</sup> In BBC WAC, T42/32/1 – 24 June 1969, League to Cowgill.



that he did not think that referees 'either need, or would want, protection at that price'. The final conclusion of Cowgill's peroration of slow-motion was as follows:

'The truth of this particular situation is that in over 30 "Matches of the Day" which appeared on BBC-1 last season, the slow-motion replays of crucial decisions that were shown almost unanimously appeared to endorse the correctness of a refereeing decision. (...). The fact is that two senior members of the League panel went out of their way at the end of the season to let us know that in their opinion the referees were getting fair treatment from BBC coverage. I like to think that's because television, on balance, is contributing to the interests of the game in a very important respect – by letting the justice that is undoubtedly done be seen to be done.'<sup>108</sup>

It is very interesting to note how, more or less in the same years, the use of slow-motion was spreading around Europe. In Italy, for instance, it became a regular feature of the Sunday night programme *La domenica sportiva* since the 1967-68 season. The first famous utilisation of the *moviola*, as it was called, was in October 1967 to find out whether the Gianni Rivera's goal, decisive in the 1-0 victory of A.C. Milan in the derby with Internazionale, was a regular one or not (it was not, actually). In those early days the *moviola* was mainly utilised to show particularly skilled movements by the players; its popular success, though, was due to the analysis of the most controversial decisions by referees; and the Italian TV public service RAI received many letters of complaint by the viewers when sometimes it was decided not to show those particular accidents in order not to put in jeopardy referees' authority. But the newspapers did nothing but fomenting this kind of 'controversial' approach: 'Why no slow-motion on Sormani's goal?'<sup>109</sup> was just one of the many illustrative headlines showing the importance given by

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<sup>108</sup> BBC WAC, T42/32 – 25 June 1969, Cowgill to Brown.

<sup>109</sup> *Corriere dello Sport*, 15 January 1968.

the press to the *moviola* with the aim of stirring up endless talks by the fans throughout the week<sup>110</sup>.

Moving back to England, complaints by the League appeared again in June 1971, with Hardaker raising the question of a ban on slow-motion replays to Cowgill and Gerry Loftus of ITV. Hardaker said to the two television companies' officials that Clubs were 'extremely concerned' at what they considered to be a television campaign designed to 'pillory referees and the standards of refereeing'<sup>111</sup>. As had happened two years earlier, Cowgill showed fierce opposition:

'Both Loftus and I rejected this as a distortion of the situation. The fact that one or two refereeing decisions last season caused great controversy was one thing: to interpret this as a witch-hunt inspired by television was not justified. Our duty as in all things was to be fair and responsible, but our first duty was to preserve the basic freedom to be so.'<sup>112</sup>.

The BBC and ITV were fighting alongside each other in order to defend their right to inform and against any form of censorship. Therefore they started planning a joint strategy, with David Attenborough, BBC Director of Programs, informing Denis Forman of Granada Television that their policy was that they could not deny themselves

'i) replays of controversial incidents with criticism of referees' decision;  
ii) discussion of controversial incidents and referees' decision;  
iii) interviews before or after games with players or managers involved if they were available to us.'<sup>113</sup>.

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<sup>110</sup> About the relationship between sport and TV in Italy see: Iozzia, Giovanni/Minerva, Luciano, *Un matrimonio d'interesse. Sport e televisione*, Torino: 1986; Bettetini, Gianfranco/Grasso, Aldo (eds.), *Lo specchio sporco della Televisione*, Torino: 1988; In particular, the link between football and television has been studied by Luciano Minerva: Minerva, L., *Il Pallone nella rete*, Roma: 1990.

<sup>111</sup> BBC WAC, T42/32 – 23 June 1971, 'Football League'. The League had also raised the matter of interviews by players and managers after games.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> BBC WAC, T42/32/1 – 29 June 1971, Attenborough to Forman.



Things calmed down for a year or so, but were far from being definitely settled, though. Again in October 1972 Hardaker complained very harshly about the use of slow-motion replays by both *MOTD* and *The Big Match*:

‘The slow-motion play-back is emerging as a very dangerous toy in the hands of children who cannot use it. I deal day by day with people at all levels of the game and there is an increasing resistance towards television. It is beginning to look to many people as if it is time TV was set upon.’<sup>114</sup>.

This time, though, *MOTD* staff fought back, threatening legal consequences. Cowgill wrote again to Hardaker, asking for specific evidence of any particular instance where the League would feel that BBC coverage might pillory match officials or being in breach of the contract. ‘I have not received any such evidence from you. The reason as a matter of fact is that you have no cause to do so because we do not pillory match officials’. Cowgill felt quite uncomfortable with this situation of ‘open war’, as it had been defined on the press, and he felt particularly upset due to the fact that he was one of the main supporters of slow-motion at the BBC:

‘Having introduced action replay techniques to television coverage of sport in this country in 1966, I have naturally a close and personal interest in its development. Millions of people in this country enjoy, and have become accustomed to, the extra degree of illumination it provides. At the same time I have always insisted that it should be used to illuminate and not to pillory (...). I therefore take a full share of responsibility for its present use in BBC programmes.’<sup>115</sup>.

He then concluded the letter with a veiled threat of taking the matter up legally if the League decided to go further with their opposition to slow-motion without

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<sup>114</sup> *Daily Express* (London edition), 23 October 1972 (20).

<sup>115</sup> BBC WAC, T42/32 – 24 October 1972, Cowgill to Hardaker.

supporting evidence of television companies using replays outside the letter or the spirit of the contract.

In his subsequent reply, Hardaker, as testified by Cowgill himself, denied ‘totally that he had in any way sought to implicate the BBC or its staff, and that he had no complaint against the BBC Outside Broadcasts Department’, and claimed that the *Daily Express* had printed ‘a “garbled” version of what he had said to them’, and that ‘he had not complained to them of the BBC’s use of slow-motion in its football programme’<sup>116</sup>.

The TV people would stick to their guns, this time, and the slow-motion would remain an unmissable piece of their artillery. The League had to accept the situation and to bow to modernity, technology<sup>117</sup>.

### Big money starts talking

In 1972 ‘media institutions could suffer occasional bouts of sickness’<sup>118</sup> due to the fact that ownership of TV sets had reached saturation point and that the initial take up of colour was relatively slow<sup>119</sup>. Nonetheless, it was a record year for sport on television. The BBC, taking advantage of the Government lifting all

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<sup>116</sup> BBC WAC, T42/32 – 9 November 1972, “‘Match of the Day” Slow Motion’.

<sup>117</sup> Another interesting as well as curious (and a little dangerous) utilisation of the slow-motion machine was in the High Court: ‘Mr Justice Bristow watched an action replay of a football match between Newcastle United and Coventry City on a television set in the High Court yesterday during an action by Ernie Machin, the Coventry half back. He was asked to decide whether Mr Machin had fouled Wyn Davies, the Newcastle striker. Mr Machin was sent off by the referee and suspended by the Football Association disciplinary committee. The judge, after watching the film three times, said it was perfectly clear that the referee had got his particulars “absolutely wrong”. Mr Machin contends that the Tyne Tees television film clearly shows that he did not kick Wyn Davies and he is asking the judge to declare the FA decision void. (...) The judge said the film clearly showed that Mr Machin had tackled Wyn Davies and had brought him down. (...)’, *The Times*, 19 October 1972 (15f).

<sup>118</sup> Crisell, *An Introductory History...*, p. 128.

<sup>119</sup> If in 1970 775,000 colour TV sets only had been bought, by 1973 that number had reached 6m; and in 1977 colour TVs had overtaken telephones. See Crisell, *An Introductory History...*, p. 150.



restrictions on TV broadcasting hours, devoted more than 1,200 hours of programming to sport coverage (representing the 15.7% of the whole programming – Sport on ITV represented 12% of programming), with 90 hours of Olympic Games and more than 100 of football. *MOTD* recorded an average audience of 11.25 million viewers

The televising of the 1973 FA Cup Final early in May, when Second Division Sunderland pulled off one of the greatest shocks in the history of the competition by beating Leeds United 1-0, established the new record for British audience with 19,500,000 viewers watching the coverage of the game on BBC, and 7,500,000 on ITV. A few days later some rumours of Jimmy Hill ('aged 44, (...) a member of the Sports Council, a former chairman of the Professional Footballers' Association, former Coventry City manager and former player for Fulham and Brentford'<sup>120</sup>, and, most of all, presenter of ITV's *The Big Match*) being contracted by the BBC for its sport team, became reality. Competition meant 'buying' the best 'players' of the other team, in order to both weaken the adversary and strengthen their side at the same time. Actually, it had been commercial television that had started this strategy, like when, for instance, BBC's Eamonn Andrews and Brian Moore, among the others, had been contracted by commercial television companies in the Sixties; and when the BBC had tried to do the same in 1971 it had been Jimmy Hill himself to denounce the fact:

'(...) I would ask Mr Dimmock to confirm that the single approach for one member of the BBC sports team, to which he referred, was made three years ago before London Weekend Television was on the air. I also challenge him

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<sup>120</sup> *The Times*, 24 May 1973 (3f).

to deny that in the past six months at least two outstanding members of ITV's sports team, to my knowledge, have been approached by the BBC to play in his division, whichever it may be, and have preferred to stay with us. It is unconceivable that there may have been other approaches of which I have not been aware.'<sup>121</sup>.

Once contracted by the BBC, Jimmy Hill, who had presented ITV's *The Big Match* since 1968 along with Brian Moore, was immediately awarded the captaincy of the flagship of televised football at the Corporation: *Match of the Day*. By the 1972-73 season, before Hill's arrival, *MOTD* viewing figures were already averaging 12 million in its 10 o'clock slot on BBC1. When in August 1974 the programme marked its tenth anniversary it could be said that it had become a 'household institution'<sup>122</sup>; and when on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1977 it celebrated the start of the new football season by going on air for the five hundredth time it could count on an average weekly audience still comfortably cruising well over 11.5 million of 'compulsive' viewers 'who have caught a habit that Americans call "chewing gum for the eyes"'<sup>123</sup>. The habit of watching the programme on Saturday night had developed into a sort of social-crossing ritual that, according to one of its presenters, John Motson

'emptied pubs before closing time, interrupted family parties, and realigned the routine of clergymen, film stars and even Royalty. It kept the children up and sometimes, it should be said, it sent mum to bed. (...). It was topical entertainment before the cocoa had cooled. By the end of the seventies, Saturday night without *Match of the Day* seemed unthinkable.'<sup>124</sup>.

In winter 1974 the three-year agreement signed in 1971 was coming to an end, and a new contract for weekend highlights had to be negotiated. Early in February rumours came out that a joint offer by the BBC and ITV for coverage of

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<sup>121</sup> *The Times*, 16 July 1971 (13g).

<sup>122</sup> *The Listener*, 5 September 1974 (298).

<sup>123</sup> *The Times*, 20 August 1977, (2b).

<sup>124</sup> Motson, *Match of the Day...*, p. 7.



the next three seasons had been rejected by the League Management Committee. The offer was in the region of £600,000 a year for three years to be shared by the two TV companies, representing a dramatic 200% increase in respect to the previous contract. But, as reported by Hardaker himself some years later, the offer was probably much higher: 'They put the offer at £3½ million pounds, but this included likely fees from ground advertising and all manner of bits and pieces'<sup>125</sup>.

Negotiations kept going on throughout winter, but still in April there did not seem to be any step forward, with the TV networks stuck on their initial offer. The problem that caused opposition from the clubs was not only related to the economic terms of the bid, but also to the long-term nature of it: 'the clubs want a new contract negotiated through professional advisers solely for one season'<sup>126</sup>. This policy of a one-year contract was the consequence of the clubs' worry about the possible effects of inflation in those oil crisis years.

Within the League itself, though, there was controversy between the position of the clubs and that of the Management Committee. The President of the League,

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<sup>125</sup> Hardaker, *Hardaker of the...*, p. 226. Actually, there was another bid of £750,000 for one season, made by a private company, 'Sporton TV' of Peter Orton: 'The offer was contained in a letter on behalf of Mr Orton signed by Mr R. Wincour, of Coudent Brothers, American lawyers, and yesterday Mr Hardaker said that on the instructions of Lord Westwood, the League president, he had asked for full details of the proposed offer. Mr Hardaker said: "I asked them today for the following information: (1) the amount to be paid, (2) the number of years of agreement, (3) what showing – how many live, filmed, etc, and (4) to what organisation/organisations they proposed to sell.". Within a few hours Mr Hardaker received a reply on telex covering the following points which he raised. He said the company's reply was (1) the amount to be paid is £750,000, possibly subject to a short option at a lesser amount and in any event subject to point three (what showing). In addition the offer would include 50 per cent from clients net from merchandising and foreign broadcasts, (2) one year with options for two more at increased prices followed by first refusal (3) the client suggests personal disclosure of proposed format with understanding that it should be part of negotiations'. The offer, though, was never taken in serious consideration by the League. See: *The Times*, 17 April 1974 (10f)

<sup>126</sup> *The Times*, 24 April 1974 (12b).

Len Shipman, for instance, displayed his clear disappointment at the clubs' decision not to accept the bid:

'The Football League must act without delay to end the deadlock on the television issue, for the sake of 20 million viewers, especially the sick and the pensioners. (...) I am deeply concerned and very disappointed at the clubs' decision to turn down the BBC and ITV offers.'<sup>127</sup>.

Notwithstanding this pressure from the higher ranks of the League, the clubs stuck to their guns, showing how in this governing body of football there was 'much resistance and a reluctance to change' and how it was 'still dominated by men steeped in the traditions of voluntarism', as underlined by Carter<sup>128</sup>. This voluntarist approach would be confirmed by Gordon McKeag, Director of Newcastle Utd from 1972 to 1992, when, many years later, he would recall how things worked in those years: 'Directors of my generation certainly never dreamt of taking any money from the club'<sup>129</sup>.

Talks and negotiations did not seem to speed up in the next weeks. It was not until June that something new was known about the state of negotiation, when, in a special meeting called on 7<sup>th</sup> June, the League clubs decided to reject the advice of the Management Committee and of a professional adviser, Harold Davidson, to accept the new increased offer of £1,9m for three seasons ('his considered opinion was that no one could have got a better offer out of television than the League'<sup>130</sup>). The clubs, instead, voted in favour of asking for £750,000 for one season only.

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<sup>127</sup> *The Times*, 25 April 1974 (10a).

<sup>128</sup> Carter, *The Football Manager...*, p. 102.

<sup>129</sup> Interview released to the programme *The Men Who Changed Football*, broadcast by Channel4 on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2001.

<sup>130</sup> Hardaker, *Hardaker of the...*, p. 227.



The different point of view between the Management Committee and the clubs can be explained by the different policies pursued: if on one hand the bigger First Division clubs were in favour of separate negotiations club by club, or of a short-term contract, the Committee was clearly oriented towards a common long-term contract in order to have more dividends also for the smaller clubs, fearing that a total blackout on football could reflect negatively in attendance, by diminishing the interest of the people towards League football. There was a third position too, curiously held by the vast majority of Second Division clubs, which, if in principle were close to the Management Committee's advice, in practical terms were aimed at getting a much higher bid. The position of the Management Committee was justified by the fact that, in the words of Hardaker, the television companies would certainly say 'no' to the clubs' request and 'the way would then be left open for clubs to negotiate their own terms for the televising of League matches', and this 'would mean lucrative contracts for the big clubs with the poorer ones from the second, third and fourth divisions being left out' On the other hand there were the bigger clubs that, as explained by Lord Westwood of Newcastle United, thought that 'no television will mean a serious loss of revenue' and that in the case the things did not change he would think of his club's shareholders on this issue. Finally, the Second Division clubs thought that, as said by David Goldstone of Cardiff, 'the television companies have made it abundantly clear that they can pay vast sums for the World Cup' by being competitive among

each other, but that in the case of League matches they had combined into a cartel in order to get football 'on the cheap'<sup>131</sup>.

This time, though, the BBC and ITV were soundly anchored to the idea that their latest offer would be the final one, and 'lost no time in rejecting the £750,000 for one season proposal'<sup>132</sup>. Their position was even sounder because this time they knew that the internal row within the League was playing in their favour. And so it was. On 13<sup>th</sup> July the League clubs accepted 'by a substantial majority' (36 to 13) the £1.9m for three years joint ITV and BBC offer. Only one point needed to be 'ironed out', Hardaker said: the effect of inflation during next three years. He also added that after the signing of this contract 'the management committee would be looking into "more equitable distribution" of the money from television among the clubs'<sup>133</sup>. In a few words, the Management Committee had probably 'managed' to convince the smaller clubs to accept the offer instead of sticking on asking for more money, because there would not be any further offer by TV companies. So, after six months of negotiations, the BBC and ITV had managed, by keeping a joint policy of negotiation, to 'continue in partnership in the best interests of the game for a further three years at last'. This happy partnership was to come to an end in a few months, though.

### **An alternative choice**

The experience of the TV broadcasting of the 1974 World Cup, when a huge battle for the audience had taken place between the two companies, with viewers

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<sup>131</sup> *The Times*, 8 June 1974 (15f).

<sup>132</sup> *The Times*, 10 June 1974 (11f).

<sup>133</sup> *The Times*, 14 July 1974 (14f).



‘bombarded with World Cup transmissions for many hours on both channels’<sup>134</sup>, had led ITV to draw some conclusion. On the one hand it was impossible to deny that in the case of football screened at differed hours, the audience figures were quite similar; on the other hand, though, audience figures and appreciation were generally in favour of the Corporation in the case of overlapping of the same event on both channels. Therefore Independent Television tried to extend their cooperation policy with the BBC further than for negotiations with football authorities only. The aim was to convince the BBC to share on a rota basis not only the recorded highlights of League football, but also live broadcasting of big sporting events, officially in order to ‘avoid saturation’ for the public, actually to have larger audiences for some important sporting events and then to sell commercial spaces at higher fees.

Actually, discussion over the rota-basis also for big sporting events had already been launched in 1970 after the televising of the European Cup Final, when a leading article of *The Times* titled ‘Mad with Football’ highlighted some interesting issues:

‘The saturation television coverage which was given last night to the European Cup Final may be a foretaste of the kind of frustrations which will be incurred by viewers who are not interested in football during the World Cup bonanza later this summer. Both BBC1 and the Independent network featured extensive film of the Cup Final between Celtic and Feyenoord of Holland. Identical pictures of the play were shown on both channels because the presentation came from a common source – Italian television. It was left to BBC2 to provide alternative viewing, as will be the case during the World Cup. But, apart from any incidental benefits to BBC2, it is a highly unsatisfactory situation where both major channels saturate their programmes with the same sporting subject because they fear it will capture the majority of viewers. (...). It cannot be right to carry the perfectly natural competition

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<sup>134</sup> *The Times*, 19 February 1975 (3g). Between them the BBC and ITV screened about 135 hours during the three weeks of the competition, each spending about £400,000 on their World Cup coverage. See: Buscombe, *Football on Television...*, pp. 1-2.

between the Independent network and the BBC to such an extent that the entire viewing public has to put up with the same programme on both channels because neither channel has the nerve to question an assumption that sport – almost any sport – provides the most popular viewing. (...). Last night's incident shows quite clearly that the existence of two channels in itself cannot create the kind of competition which should provide the viewing public with a clear choice between them. All it is providing at present is competition between two channels to provide almost the same product, garnished here and there in such a way that the initiators will be able to claim some spurious superiority over their rivals. That is clearly an inadequate basis for the public to exercise a choice.'<sup>135</sup>.

If ITV were clearly in favour of a system of shared televising of big sporting events on a rota basis, the BBC were apparently 'stiff-necked about it', though<sup>136</sup>. Huw Wheldon, BBC Managing Director of Television, made things clear in a letter to *The Times*:

'The BBC believes profoundly in planned alternatives, and BBC2 was set up precisely to provide such alternatives and is doing so. Twenty-four million people now have BBC2 (...). ITV however was set up expressly to compete with the BBC, and competition, "this irksome duplication", inescapably involves like against like, play against play or whatever, in some degree. You can either have networks run on a complementary basis and jointly planned, or on a competitive basis. In this country we have both. BBC1 and BBC2 are complementary. BBC Television and ITV compete. The competitive part of the picture has great advantages, but it has its drawbacks too. (...). The majority of viewers have made it clear that for one reason and another they prefer the way in which the BBC presents them (*big sporting occasions*). To deny them this on 50 per cent of occasions is by no means a service.'<sup>137</sup>.

The first move came in February 1975, when informal exchanges between the BBC and ITV took place in an attempt reach agreement on sharing the transmission of big sporting events. 'We hope to do our best to limit the deprivation to the public as far as we possibly can, even though we and the BBC

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<sup>135</sup> *The Times*, 7 May 1970 (13a).

<sup>136</sup> *The Times*, 13 May 1970 (11c).

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*



have got to spend less', Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA)<sup>138</sup> Director General Bryan Young told the press<sup>139</sup>.

In March, commercial television offered to withdraw its coverage of the forthcoming FA Cup Final if the Corporation would reciprocate by conceding ITV the sole right of screening the England-Scotland international, suggesting furthermore that the position could be reversed in 1976, with ITV screening the Cup Final and the BBC the England-Scotland game: 'we continue to be of the opinion that the public would be better served if we could agree that they (*big sporting events*) should not be shown on both channels at the same time'<sup>140</sup>. The reply from the Corporation came quick and sharp:

'The short answer is that we would no more want to opt out of showing the Cup final or the England versus Scotland home international than we would want to opt out of showing the results on election night or royal occasions such as Princess Anne's wedding. (...) as the national broadcasting organization the BBC could not ignore national events.'<sup>141</sup>.

The controversy did not bring any immediate effect. It came to an end only in June 1979, when both the BBC and ITV eventually reached a compromise over the screening of the 1980 Olympics and 1982 World Cup, with only the World Cup Final to be shown simultaneously. The agreement, despite the words of a BBC spokesman who told the press that they had still not conceded true

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<sup>138</sup> The Sound Broadcasting Act 1972 gave the ITA responsibility for organising commercial radio in the UK, and reconstituted the ITA as the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). The IBA was the regulatory body in the United Kingdom for commercial television and radio broadcasts. The IBA came into being in 1972 and was disbanded in 1990, when it was replaced by the Independent Television Commission (ITC) (and the Radio Authority) under the provisions of the Broadcasting Act 1990, which themselves were replaced by the Office of Communications (Ofcom) at the end of 2003.

<sup>139</sup> *The Times*, 19 February 1975, (3g).

<sup>140</sup> Lord Aleyston, ITV's chairman, to Sir Michael Swann, BBC's chairman. *The Times*, 21 March 1975 (2c).

<sup>141</sup> *The Times*, 26 March 1975 (4d).

alternation and that they had agreed 'to try and avoid clashing' actually, represented a 'substantial climb-down' for the Corporation<sup>142</sup>.

### **'Snatch of the Day'**

The final agreement on alternation was effectively a spin-off from the negotiations for renewing the contract with the League that had started in November 1978. On 16<sup>th</sup> November an Extraordinary General Meeting of the League was held to discuss a 'dramatic increase' in television fees for screening weekend football the forthcoming season, after that a contract at £420,000 'only' had been signed for the 1977/78 and that £650,000 had been borne jointly by the BBC and ITV for the 1978/79 season<sup>143</sup>. If in the past a compromise had always been reached for just marginal increases, 'this time the chairmen are in no mood for compromise'<sup>144</sup>. The meeting was just the first battle of the war that was about to begin. On the very day of the meeting, one of the ITV network companies, LWT, claimed to have obtained exclusive rights to show football League matches and League Cup nationally for three years at a fee of £1.25m for the first season and percentage increases for the next two, moving from traditional Sunday afternoon pub time slot to Saturday night. The agreement had been reached by LWT's Director of Programmes, Michael Grade, and Jack Dunnett, MP and member of both the FA Council and the League's Management Committee (and later its President)<sup>145</sup>. It was a declaration of war on the BBC, reaffirmed with the

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<sup>142</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 2 June 1979 (1f).

<sup>143</sup> Unfortunately there is no evidence of the contract or contracts in question.

<sup>144</sup> *The Times*, 16 November 1978 (12b).

<sup>145</sup> See Potter, *Independent Television...*, p. 294.



statement that this deal was ‘part of our great determination to prove that the BBC do not have the divine right to sports coverage’<sup>146</sup>. The agreement, which had the support of 50 out of the 51 voters present at the meeting of the League would not stop the BBC covering FA Cup, European competitions or international matches, but was however a major blow for the Corporation.

BBC reaction came through the words of a spokesman that declared that the company did not accept that the matter was closed and pointed out how ten years before it had been agreed that no television company would have the right to exclusive coverage of League matches. BBC officials were ‘furious’ about the unilateral deal, and they felt betrayed by both ITV and the League: ‘if you are going to work jointly with people, it must be on the basis of trust, but as of today that trust has been very ‘severely fractured’, Ian Trethowan, Director General, declared<sup>147</sup>. They felt betrayed by the League, accused of ‘a lack of integrity’<sup>148</sup> by Jimmy Hill, co-presenter of *MOTD* (Jimmy Hill was not the most innocent character on the scene, though, given his clear conflict of interest on the matter: he was not just presenter of *MOTD*, but also managing director of Coventry City, which, incidentally was the only club that at the meeting had voted against the deal with LWT; furthermore, during his chairmanship of the PFA he had been one of the harshest critics of the Football League). And as far as ITV was concerned, betrayal was even more painful in consideration of the fact that one of the founders of *MOTD* as well as head at the Sports department, Bryan Cowgill, was

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<sup>146</sup> *The Times*, 17 November 1978 (12g).

<sup>147</sup> *The Times*, 18 November 1978 (1).

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

now Managing Director of ITV's Thames Television<sup>149</sup>, and had probably been directly involved in the secret negotiation cutting the BBC out of the scene. Cowgill justified ITV's behaviour by saying that the deal was 'the only answer to the BBC's continued intransigence about alternation'; but the BBC were far from giving up, and as Alasdair Milne, Managing Director, said, they were going 'to fight it most strongly'<sup>150</sup>.

The threat to BBC football coverage was just the tip of an iceberg of the BBC's dreadful finance crisis, and even though it was not a direct consequence of this crisis, it 'vividly illustrates the corporation's debilitating lack of cash in the face of the overflowing coffers of the 19 independent television companies'<sup>151</sup>. The BBC were losing not only football, but even secretaries, make-up girls, engineers, production staff, producers, directors (as Cowgill's move to ITV demonstrates), and video tape operators. But in those years the crisis not was just a peculiarity of the Corporation, of course. Britain as a whole was experiencing one of the worst economic crisis in its history, mainly due to the effects of the international oil crisis. As pinpointed by Andrew Crisell, 'industrial stoppages were so commonplace and inflation so rampant that Britain became known as the "sick man of Europe"'; and 'the BBC's economic state was a microcosm of the nation's'<sup>152</sup>.

In 1976, ITV's production of football broadcasting had had a vigorous boost through the production of the European Cup Final from Hampden Park, Glasgow.

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<sup>149</sup> Thames Television was was the weekday ITV company serving London between 1968 and 1992.

<sup>150</sup> *The Times*, 18 November 1978 (1).

<sup>151</sup> *The Times*, 18 November 1978 (2).

<sup>152</sup> Crisell, *An Introductory History...*, pp. 184-5.



That programme, as highlighted by Paulu, would be considered the milestone of ITV's outside broadcast productions:

‘Just as the BBC reviews with great pride its coverage of the Coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953 and the funeral of Winston Churchill in 1965, so the IBA reports how Scottish and Tyne Tees Television broadcast the 1976 European Cup to all of Europe from Glasgow.’<sup>153</sup>.

On the night of 12<sup>th</sup> May some 50 million viewers in 28 countries across Europe watched Bayern Munich triumph over French club St Etienne thanks to ITV's technical organisation. That night was a night never to be forgotten for ITV, ‘it was the night that ITV Sport successfully mounted the biggest sports outside broadcast in the history of British television’<sup>154</sup>. It was an all-out effort for commercial television, with equipment valued more than £2½ million gathered in Glasgow, and 125 people (commentators, cameramen, editors, producers, riggers, engineers, etc) involved in an operation that was considered ‘as a clear demonstration of the strength of ITV's federal structure’<sup>155</sup>, ITV Sport supplying production and editorial skills and Scottish Television and TTT supporting with their engineering staff. A 2-camera studio was specially built at Hampden in order to host the ITV panel of experts (presenter Dickie Davies was joined by England Manager Don Revie, and Glasgow Rangers captain John Greig); 2 cameras were placed on two platforms built in the main stand to operate during the presentation of the Cup and to capture pre- and post-match activities. The game was covered by 4 cameras, and the commentary for British viewers was supplied by Brian Moore. Production and televising of this match, as well as those of League Cup

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<sup>153</sup> Paulu, *Television and Radio...* , p. 322.

<sup>154</sup> *ITV: Guide to Independent Television – 1977*, p. 36.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

Finals (a regular yearly feature for ITV) capturing relevant audience figures, added to the results of some audience researches that showed how in *World of Sport* vs. *Grandstand* ITV's share of audience had been 53% in 1975 and 55% in 1976<sup>156</sup>, all those achievements gave Independent Television the sensation that they could snatch that leadership in covering football that the BBC had always kept. But, despite its economic crisis and the huge leap forward made by Independent Television, which after having experienced its own economic crisis in the early '70s seemed to be in good shape, the BBC would not give up their struggle for football.

The first move was to find out whether there was ground for legal action<sup>157</sup>; at the same time a decision was expected from the inquiries that were being made by the Director General of Fair Trading whether the deal would be referred to the Monopolies Commission. Apparently the Government itself was in favour of the agreement, as testified by the statement issued by Denis Howell, Minister for Sport, in which it was reported that the agreement had to be considered as in the best interest of football and that he felt that 'any sport should get as much money as it could from those who were able and willing to pay for facilities'<sup>158</sup>. Pressure was put also on the clubs with a letter in which the BBC asked them questions on four key-topics: 1) what had been the role of Gerry Loftus, the ITV negotiator; 2) what had been the part played by the IBA, and if they had found acceptable the method adopted by LWT; 3) what had been the role of Alan Hardaker and

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<sup>156</sup> Information from Potter, *Independent Television...*, p. 282.

<sup>157</sup> Legal adviser was Mr Robert Alexander, who had represented Mr Kerry Packer in his successful High Court action the year before against the International Cricket Conference and the Test and County Cricket Board.

<sup>158</sup> *The Times*, 20 November 1978 (10f).



whether he had acted on the instruction of the Management Committee in not informing the BBC of the pending deal; 4) whether the clubs had been reminded of the joint negotiating procedure created by the League itself<sup>159</sup>.

Furthermore, the BBC wrote to Sir Brian Young, Director-General of the IBA, asking for an explanation of the reason the Authority had not intervened in preventing one of its companies from breaking a 10-year-old concordat that did not include unilateral negotiations and that, according to the BBC, had never been revoked. Sir Young replied that they had been made aware of the steps taken by LWT only one week earlier, but that, given that there was a strong possibility that there would be no Football League matches at all on television next season, a decisive initiative was needed in order to safeguard the interests of the audience. Therefore, in such circumstances, 'recourse to the concordat was not likely to be of any avail'<sup>160</sup>. Anyway, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November the BBC announced they had issued a writ at the High Court against LWT and the League, seeking damages from LWT for breach of the agreement covering joint negotiations and from LWT and the League for conspiring to injure the BBC by negotiating a deal in breach of an existing agreement. The case would be heard in the High Court on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1979. In the meanwhile the Office of Fair Trading started an investigation on the case, the agreement appearing to be contrary to the restrictive trade practices legislation.

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<sup>159</sup> The content of the letter, signed by all the *MOTD* commentators, including David Coleman, Jimmy Hill, and John Motson, was reported by *The Times*, 22 November 1978 (15h). It was impossible to find the original copy at the BBC WAC.

<sup>160</sup> *The Times*, 23 November 1978 (2a).

At this point unexpected help came to the BBC from the intervention of the European Economic Community (EEC). According to some officials of the EEC the agreement between LWT and the League could be in violation of free trade rules, restricting the choice of suppliers available to non-British EEC television which would like to run film clips of League matches via the Eurovision link, therefore violating the Community's competition rules. When in March Mr Gordon Borrie, Director-General of the Office of Fair Trading declared to the press that 'the chances are that when the new season comes along, football will be seen on BBC as well as ITV', and that the situation will be sorted out 'shortly'<sup>161</sup>, the wind seemed to be blowing in the BBC's direction, at last.

As Potter, the official historian of Independent Television, reports,

'ITV's chances of winning in the law courts looked good, but it was recognised that the cost would be high and that winner and loser alike would suffer from a public airing of their differences.'<sup>162</sup>

Therefore, the best solution for ITV was to give up the LWT/League agreement and to start new negotiations jointly with the Corporation. Talks with the BBC started immediately, and already on 23<sup>rd</sup> March the news broke that

'the BBC and ITV have reached an agreement on sharing coverage of football on television which will ensure the continuation of the BBC's "Match of the Day". The deal provides for Football League matches on both channels during the next four seasons at a cost of more than £10 millions, which will be shared between the BBC and ITV.'<sup>163</sup>

The bid terms included the agreement between the two broadcasters that there would be alternation, year by year, of the Saturday night slot, with the BBC

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<sup>161</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 21 March 1979 (1).

<sup>162</sup> Potter, *Independent Television...*, p. 297.

<sup>163</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 23 March 1979 (1e). Just a reminder of previous long-term contracts: 1971/74 at £240,000 per season; 1974/77 at about £630,000 per season.



having the chance to screen *MOTD* on Saturday in 1979/80 and 1981/82, while ITV *The Big Match*'s turn would be in 1980/81 and 1982/83.

The new agreement, which was actually worth £9.5m and not £10m, appeared anyway to be much more lucrative than the former exclusive ITV's bid, doubling the amount of money the League would earn from television. The only drawback was the length of the contract, being a four-year agreement liable to increased inflation especially in the second half of the term. This problem was immediately clear to the clubs, which asked for an 'inflation clause', tied to the retail price index, to be included in the contract for the 1981/82 and 1982/83 seasons. The BBC and ITV refused to amend the bid with this 'inflation clause', and, after a special meeting held in London in late March, the reply from the League clubs was to reject the bid and to start new negotiation for a two-year contract. Then, in April, the BBC and ITV, after having turned down the two-year claim, improved their offer by agreeing to bring payments forward. The new offer would be discussed by the League in their forthcoming AGM in June.

When the League met, two different points of view on the matter appeared. On the one hand the Management Committee, led by Alan Hardaker, thought that rejecting the offer would be a severe economic blow for the League, considering as well that 'there would also be a loss of revenue from the display of advertising hoardings around the grounds'. On the other hand there was 'a considerable lobby which believes that the medium is a mixed blessing', given the allegations that gates might be affected and that 'editing produces a distorted picture of some games'. General feeling on the eve of the meeting, though, was that the clubs

would be 'unlikely to decide against a massive cash injection at a time when the transfers show no sign of decreasing and wages and other expenses continue to rise'<sup>164</sup>. So it was.

Discussion among the clubs was quite harsh, and not without casualties. Jack Dunnett of Notts County, for instance, announced his resignation from the Management Committee at an early stage of the meeting, because 'he could not support the recommendation for acceptance'. But in the end the bid, amended with a 10% inflation ceiling clause for the last two years of the contract, was accepted. Not everybody at the League was happy, especially on the matter of inflation, but, to use the words of John Smith of Liverpool, the League would be 'dependent upon good-will in the last two years if inflation rises', but 'that should not be a problem, because we are dealing with gentlemen'<sup>165</sup>.

A few months later, in September, contracts were signed between the two television channels and the FA for about 36 matches (FA Cup matches and Internationals) each season for the next four seasons to be viewed either on BBC or ITV, with a slight increase of midweek coverage (16 midweek matches per season instead of 14). The overall economic value of the contracts was not declared officially, but it was publicised that it was more than three times the fees paid according to the old contract, and these new contracts were 'on similar lines to those the Football League have made with television'<sup>166</sup>. Therefore, after a long period when the FA had felt that their product had been viewed on TV 'at too low a price', this time, according to what the FA Secretary declared to the press after

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<sup>164</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 1 June 1979 (33c).

<sup>165</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 2 June 1979 (27d).

<sup>166</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 25 September 1979 (34a).



an FA Council meeting, they were ‘delighted’ with the money they will be getting under the new contracts. With this contract, along with the other one with the League, televised football, in the joint hands of the BBC and ITV, was safe for the next four seasons.

### **Big Match, little audience**

ITV had not managed to get exclusive rights, but to some extent they got what they were really looking for: football on Saturday night. The BBC had always had an advantage ‘because Saturday is the essential football day and (...) Sunday is not yet emotionally geared to the game’, as stated by Derek Dougan on *The Listener* already in 1974<sup>167</sup>. Therefore, even though Independent Television was to share the Saturday slot on a year-by-year alternation basis, at least they were now ready for the real breakthrough. And when after the first edition of *The Big Match* on Saturday was screened in August 1980, LWT claimed a ratings victory over the BBC (‘it was an extraordinary decision by the BBC to put on feature films against the Saturday night football. “But we managed to tie with the film, *Serpico*, and we also had a better rating figure than Match of the Day”’, Mr Michael Grade, LWT programmes director declared to the press<sup>168</sup>), this breakthrough eventually seemed to materialise, especially in consideration of the fact that in 1979, ITV had also managed to get the alternation rota basis for coverage of big sporting events, such as the 1982 Football World Cup, too. After almost 25 years of life, ITV obtained the legitimacy in coverage of football they

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<sup>167</sup> *The Listener*, 5 September 1974 (298).

<sup>168</sup> *The Times*, 22 August 1980 (3a).

had so desperately struggled for. However, *The Big Match* on Saturday night was never as successful as its contender, *MOTD*, had been on the same slot. Already in November 1980 ITV was forced to bring forward the screening of the programme in order to halt sliding viewing figures. John Bromley, the vice chairman of ITV network sport, embarrassingly justified the debacle to the press by stating that they had 'lost a certain amount of the audience we had before because parents do not allow their children to stay up late on Saturday night to watch the programme'<sup>169</sup>. After 25 years of struggle for taking the lead over the BBC in the field of televised football, 3 months were sufficient to lose it.

Actually, the sliding audience of *The Big Match* was not caused merely by the inability of ITV to produce a programme worth watching. To be fair it has to be said that football in general was suffering from a sort of disaffection by the public, especially as far as attendances at the grounds were concerned. One of the causes of that disaffection can be spotted in the over-coverage both on television and in the press. Already as early as in January 1976 UEFA had highlighted the necessity to change something in the relationship of football with television throughout Europe, with delegates from more than 30 countries meeting at an extraordinary congress voting 'overwhelmingly to control the effect of television on falling attendances'<sup>170</sup>. UEFA itself rang a further bell of alarm late in 1980, when General Secretary Hans Bangerter, in an end-of-year article in UEFA's official bulletin, affirmed that crisis measures were needed to save European soccer, considered 'unattractive and played by overpaid stars', and that every

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<sup>169</sup> *The Times*, 19 November 1980 (8a).

<sup>170</sup> *The Times*, 29 January 1976 (10a).



effort had to be made 'to prevent football reaching the point where it only continues to interest television viewers and people who fill out pools coupons'. According to Bangerter, one of the means that could be used to entice the fans back to the stadiums could be to 'drastically cut down the amount of televised football, whether live or highlights'<sup>171</sup>.

That over-exposure of football on TV was perceived even by relevant TV people such as Jimmy Hill. In an interview released to ITV's programme *Focus* in December 1980, Hill admitted that this over-exposure could damage the image of football itself; but he also added:

'I would not like to reduce the amount of television coverage though. I would like to cut down the number of film units that go out and just gather goals as if they are reaping the harvest. That's devaluing goals.'<sup>172</sup>.

Another reason for disaffection for football was clearly related to the phenomenon of hooliganism. This is not the place to analyse the problem of violence related to football with an in-depth approach, but it would be inappropriate not to mention it, at least. The only thing that can fit with this study is the aspect related to television and to the fact that, by some parties, television was accused of incensing violence, as Harry Haslam, Sheffield United manager, pointed when interviewed on the role of the media within the general question of hooliganism: 'I personally would welcome legislation which prevented the media from covering any aspect related to crowd disturbances for a period of two years'<sup>173</sup>. And Peter Watson, from the pages of *The Times*, wondered if so much television coverage of football was doing nothing but enhancing the level of

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<sup>171</sup> *The Times*, 23 December 1980 (8e).

<sup>172</sup> *The Times*, 11 December 1980 (12e).

<sup>173</sup> *The Times*, 18 September 1980 (8e).

violence, especially among the youngsters, by copycatting what could be seen on the screen when riots actually happening at the grounds were filmed by television cameras. According to him, a reduction of coverage ‘would at least hopefully prevent the youngsters joining the ranks of the violent and remove some of the support that the older rioters and hooligans enjoy’<sup>174</sup>.

### **Ads on shirts, but not on the screen**

Before closing this chapter, there is a note that cannot be forgotten, and it regards the question of shirt advertising. In 1979 Liverpool broke the deadlock on shirt advertising by wearing by wearing jerseys with the name of the Japanese firm Hitachi; and in 1980 there were about a dozen clubs with shirt advertising. Leading clubs, such as above mentioned Liverpool and Everton (Hafnja), were paid around £50,000 per season for this facility. None of those clubs, though, could wear shirts with sponsors’ names when televised. It had been estimated that the money earned from selling ads on the shirts could be doubled with television coverage, and that to allow shirt advertising in televised matches would bring an extra £3-£5 million into the game. But players could not wear any kind of advertising when televised, due to the opposition of both the BBC, in principle, and ITV, because they did not get any money from selling this facility.

“The clubs are trying to change a key clause in our agreement with the league”, Cliff Morgan, the head of BBC outside broadcasts, said. “Whatever the clubs decide there is no way we are going to change our views on shirt advertising. (...) We didn’t even consider the question of shirt advertising because we are forbidden to have it by the TV charter.” The charter, put

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<sup>174</sup> *The Times*, 11 August 1981 (8a).



together by an Act of Parliament, states that “any advertising must be totally divorced from the main subject content of the programme”.<sup>175</sup>.

The position of the BBC against advertising on the shirts had been made clear as early as in 1968, when Peter Dimmock had affirmed that at the BBC they were worried ‘about the increasing tendency for advertisements either to be specially placed at an event because of the television coverage, or to be placed on the action itself, such as cars or players’, because, in their opinion,

‘unless we draw the line somewhere (...) a corner of the living room could soon be turned into a more or less permanent advertising campaign every time there’s a sports event on television. Do our viewers really want this to happen, even to the extent where from the players’ shirts it might appear that we were covering a football match between Brand X and Brand Y instead of, say, Leeds and Arsenal? We don’t think they do.’<sup>176</sup>.

Despite the fact that the opposition of TV companies kept shirt advertising out of television throughout the Seventies, the clubs did not give up, and in a special meeting, held in London on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1980, they insisted that they should be able to tap the financial potential of shirt advertising in televised matches. The campaign to change the rules was led by Liverpool and Everton, and led to a crashing 50-0 vote in favour of the change (although ‘the vote yesterday will not affect FA Cup matches because the Football Association have their own rule stopping shirt advertisements on television’<sup>177</sup>).

The position of the clubs against the television companies was mainly based on the fact that both the BBC and ITV were using ‘double standards’, as summarised by Peter Robinson, the Liverpool secretary:

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<sup>175</sup> *The Times*, 15 March 1980 (23c).

<sup>176</sup> Dimmock, *Television Outside...*, p. 14.

<sup>177</sup> *The Times*, 29 March 1980 (15b).

‘You see sponsors’ names plastered all over racing cars, on athletes’ number cards and all round various stadiums, but the television companies seem to have a special rule for football shirts.’<sup>178</sup>.

Actually, despite the sound opposition of television companies, the matter was not hopeless, given that the formal contract had not been signed yet, and there was just a ‘formal agreement’, therefore it was easily to expect a row on this point.

However, the Football League, despite growing pressure from the clubs to negotiate new terms with TV companies, in July 1980 sent a letter to all the clubs in which they were ordered ‘to toe the line with the television companies’ and to ‘adhere to the terms of the current contract with ITV and BBC which bans them from wearing shirts carrying advertising in front of the TV cameras’<sup>179</sup>. The clubs, obviously, did not welcome the circular with joy, and in some circumstances even tried to force the situation, like when recorded highlights of the League match between Ipswich and Middlesbrough early in September 1980, filmed by the BBC and Anglia Television, were not screened because the Middlesbrough team wore shirts advertising the Japanese car firm ‘Datsun’. And again on 22<sup>nd</sup> November of the same year, Brian Clough’s Liverpool tried to force the issue by going onto the field for their League match against First Division’s leaders Aston Villa, with the

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<sup>178</sup> *The Times*, 29 March 1980 (15b). Regarding advertisements at sport grounds and racetracks, it is interesting to read what is written in a report by the BBC on televised sport: ‘Provided it is a regular feature, paid for on an annual basis and not placed there specifically because the event is televised, and provided also that it does not interfere with the action or obtrude into the television picture, the BBC accepts such advertisements as a normal part of the background.’, BBC, *The Coverage of Sport on BBC Television*, London: 1974, p. 9.

<sup>179</sup> *The Times*, 9 July 1980 (11d).



name of their sponsor on the shirts despite the presence of television cameras<sup>180</sup>. But at the end of it all, the clubs had to abide by and to honour the existing television agreement at least until its conclusion, which meant until the 1983-1984 season.

The 1983-84 season finally saw the introduction of live League matches on TV, with the BBC and ITV sharing 14 games, the BBC choosing the Friday night slot to screen theirs and ITV opting for Sunday afternoons. It was, once again, the result of negotiations carried out by a BBC/ITV cartel. John Bromley, Head of ITV Sport between 1981 and 1988, would seem to confirm the existence of that cartel in an interview released many years later to a TV programme:

‘People say there was a cartel between ITV and the BBC about football coverage. In a sense it probably was. But the BBC colleagues wanted it that way and they wanted it split 50/50 down the middle. They were quite happy with the coverage they were getting, so (...) there was a kind of a mutual understanding with the BBC on how much we had to pay.’<sup>181</sup>.

The first game to be televised was a Tottenham Hotspur-Nottingham Forrest clash screened on ITV on 2<sup>nd</sup> October. The two-year contract signed between the League and a BBC/ITV cartel cost ‘just’ £2.6m per season. In 1988 a four-year contract would be signed at a fee of £44m. The ‘Age of Innocence’ was over. For good (of the game).

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<sup>180</sup> The decision, though, lost some of its effect because the independent station that had intended to cover the match was suffering from industrial action and would not broadcast the game in any case.

<sup>181</sup> Interview released to the programme *The Men Who Changed Football*, broadcast by Channel 4 on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2001.

## Conclusion

In drawing the picture of the history of the negotiations between football authorities and TV organisations, the BBC in particular, in Britain between 1937 and 1982, I have tried to highlight the main findings resulting from all the material I was able to look at, particularly at the BBC archives. The most evident impression is that the current symbiotic relationship characterising the bond between football and television has not always been so symbiotic. If on the one hand the TV services have always proved positive towards the possibility of including football among their programming because of the huge potential of audience appeal and the relatively cheap cost of production, the football authorities, in spite of the process of commercialisation that began in the Sixties and kept going throughout the Seventies, never really thought of TV rights as an alternative way of selling their 'product' or a further source of income. The League, in particular, has always considered 'live' television of football as a foe to fight harshly and relentlessly, a competitor rather than a complementary source of funding. It took more than 40 years to the League to understand that, in the commercial revolution British football was undergoing, television would be likely to become the main income, overtaking gates and sponsorship contracts of any kind.

By contrary, the FA played a different role, proving very friendly and much more open-minded than their 'colleagues' of the League towards the role of television in spreading the popularity of football, especially throughout the 'Rous



years'. In those days when the League was firmly opposed to TV, the FA was the one and only anchorage where the BBC could get a hold in their project of televising football. Thus, if on the one hand it was impossible to get 'live' League football, on the other one there was the televising of the main England national team internationals on a regular basis, as well as the FA Cup, which from the most important stages of the competition, offered live coverage of at least one game each round. This surely helped the competition to reinforce its prestige and to maintain and enhance its popularity among the fans until today, while in other countries, like Italy and Germany, the national cup has always been overlooked by both clubs and supporters.

This different attitude by the FA was mainly caused by two reasons. Firstly, the FA had all the interest in seeking the popularisation of the game without having any kind of economic pressure, differently from the League, which looked after the interests of the clubs rather than those of the game itself. Secondly, there was a subtler, but not less important, reason linked to the 'common' language spoken by the officers of both the FA and the BBC. People at the highest ranks of these two organisations, which were both London based, shared common cultural and social backgrounds. This situation inevitably helped the development of a friendly two-sided communication flow. On the contrary, the League was based in the North, at Preston, and clubs' directors and managers were mainly from the Northern regions. They were professionals, tradesmen and businessmen looking after their own affairs; and running the club was one of those affairs. This

essential distinction of background must not be underestimated in considering the different approaches of the two football organisations towards the BBC.

One of the goals achieved by the BBC (in perfect agreement with the FA) in the formative years of monopoly on television was to spread the popularity of the game throughout Britain, therefore playing a fundamental role in the successful expansion of the 'people's game' also in the South<sup>1</sup>. Those were the years when the Corporation aimed at being the institution in charge of forging a sense of 'Englishness' (and sometimes of a broader sense of 'Britishness') among the population through the means of Outside Broadcasts of major state events. The broadcasting and televising of what had been called the 'national' calendar of sporting events played a very important role; and football was an integral part of this project. But the BBC, sometimes, acted with too a presumptuous approach in respect to the football authorities. In particular, it was not realised that if the Corporation wanted the breakthrough as far as live television of League football was concerned, they had to count on a careful and respectful approach to negotiations, rather than cherishing the illusion of owning a sort of 'divine right' to televise football. Furthermore, the Corporation had to suffer, now and then, from some unexpected or embarrassing drawbacks, being overtaken by its commercial counterpart in particular important situations, such as when ITV managed the first 'live' television of a League match in 1960; or when the BBC began to lose part of their staff because of finance crisis (and a big part of that staff moved then to commercial television); or when it was forced to concede a

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<sup>1</sup> In particular see Bale, John, *Sport and Place: A Geography of Sport in England, Scotland and Wales*, London: 1982.



rota system for the televising of major sporting events or the programming of League football highlights on Saturday nights. But the BBC, in spite of those particular moments of crisis, never lost its leadership in televising football. At least in that 'age of innocence'.

Of course the development of the relationship between football and TV authorities has not always been plain, and even though the general pattern was the one above described, the positions were not always soundly the same, changing throughout the years in relation to any single different situation. For instance, at a certain stage of the very first steps towards commercialisation, there was the birth, in 1960, of a midweek competition run by the League and organised like the FA Cup: the League Cup. Its development, quite successful after the first disappointing editions, was mainly due to the idea of the League of giving TV a different object from the regular League tournament, such a way not only not to harm the economic interest of the clubs (on the contrary it would give them further income from both gates and selling of TV rights) but also to finally manage to offer TV authorities live TV football of a League competition. In particular the deal signed in August 1967 between the League and ITV for exclusive TV rights of the competition boosted both the popular interest in the Cup and the breakthrough of ITV for much larger figures as far as TV football audience was concerned: 'live' TV football would be no longer a BBC's prerogative.

ITV, the newcomer, tried from the beginning, through the 'dirty' means of money, to upset plans of both football authorities and the BBC. However, ITV did

not manage very often to get the results it hoped for. It took about 15 years before commercial television set a special Sports Department in order to seriously challenge the BBC's dominant position in the area of televised sport (and football in particular); and it took almost 25 years before ITV could really have equal opportunities in programming of football, when an agreement was finally signed with the League and the BBC, granting ITV the Saturday night slot for football highlights. Notwithstanding this long-lasting war had apparently finished with a tie, though, ITV did not manage to narrow the gap with the BBC in terms of audience appreciation and figures, as testified by the failure of the very first edition of *The Big Match* on the Saturday night slot in the late Seventies.

Unfortunately, due to reason of space and lack of specific documentation this part of the research was unable to develop the many other issues in a more detailed way. The role of television in changing the habits of the player on and off the pitch; the development of the career of football commentators throughout the years; the feedbacks from the viewers; the problem of advertising on the shirts and at the grounds; the advance of technology... These, and many other, issues would deserve more specific studies. And, of course, a specific research is required to investigate the history of televised football from 1982 onwards, when the age of innocence was definitely over. In a few words, the conclusion of this part of this work is that there is still a lot to do.



## **Part Two**

### ***Televising a Major Football Event: the 1966 World Cup***

*‘My brother who is 90 years of age  
enjoyed every match on the T.V. and may I  
say only shouted for ENGLAND’  
(Ms Freda Perris, letter of congratulation  
to Alf Ramsey)*



## Chapter IV

### *'Bringing the World Cup to You'*<sup>1</sup>

*'Soccer fans Bob Vincent and Christine Neill couldn't bear the thought of missing the World Cup final. So they took a portable TV set with them to their wedding on Saturday. Bob, who is 20-year-old and his 19-year-old bride, left the set outside the Church (...) during the ceremony. But as soon as they were man and wife, they hurried outside and watched the match in the church forecourt.'*  
(Daily Mirror, 1 August 1966)

*'Colleagues report returning home to hear that their wives have been glued to the set, shouting and cheering. One says his mother is refusing to take phone calls during the nightly session.'*  
(Unknown newspaper, July 1966<sup>2</sup>)

*'There was, of course, the World Cup but fortunately much else besides: drug takers, parents, dirigibles, Lord Butler, ghastly deeds in Spain. If, like me, the viewer sometimes felt the need to escape the omnipresent face of David Coleman, endlessly talking and smiling about football, there were fascinating diversions.'*  
(J.D. Havorth, *The Listener*, 4 August 1966)

As Clarke and Critcher pinpoint, it is said that, as most people can remember where they were and what they were doing when they heard that President Kennedy had been assassinated, most of the English people who are old enough exactly remember where they were when the England team won the football

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this chapter have already been published in: Chisari, Fabio, 'Shouting Housewives. The 1966 Football World Cup on British Television', in *Sport in History*, Vol. 24, 1 (Summer 2004), pp. 94-108; and Chisari, F., 'When Football Went Global: the Televising of the 1966 Rimet Cup', in *Historical Social Research*, Vol. 31, 2006, n° 1, pp. 42-54.

<sup>2</sup> In BBC WAC, T14/3264/1.

World Cup in July 1966<sup>3</sup>. Actually the answer is quite easy, and does not require such an effort of memory: they were in front of a TV set. All the memories of that Saturday afternoon in July are recalled as a series of images and sounds: the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh sitting in the royal box; Prime Minister Harold Wilson there, just one hour after his landing at Heathrow coming back from a meeting in Washington with President Lyndon Johnson; Ramsey's walk across the pitch at the end of the second half; Wolstenholme's famous sentences 'This is the day we've all been waiting for' and 'Some people are on the pitch, they think it's all over... it is now!'; Bobby Moore receiving the Jules Rimet Cup from the hands of the Queen; Nobby Styles's crazy jig at the end. When after the match hundreds of thousands of people poured into the streets of Central London they were celebrating not only a triumph of the country, but something that they had witnessed with their own eyes in a shared experience that, in a moment of economic and social crisis, represented an important instrument of national cohesion. All this thanks to TV.

### **The World Cup on TV**

Filming of the Jules Rimet Cup (better known nowadays as the 'World Cup') had started as early as 1934 in Italy. But to see the first world cup match on TV thanks to a specific television broadcast, one had to wait until 16<sup>th</sup> June 1954, when the opening match of the tournament held in Switzerland between France and Yugoslavia was televised: the first world cup live TV transmission ever. The

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<sup>3</sup> Clarke, John/Critcher, Chas, '1966 and all that: England's World Cup Victory', in Tomlinson, Alan/Whannel, G. (eds), *Off the Ball: the Football World Cup*, London: 1986, p. 112.



televising of that event was due in part to the interest of the 4-year-old EBU, in which the BBC had a leading role in terms of money, technical aspects and staff.

The EBU had managed to reach an agreement with FIFA to buy the rights of the World Cup, starting a fruitful relationship that lasted for a very long time. The first experimental broadcast of this sporting event was seen by the Corporation as a very good occasion to enhance their already abundant sporting coverage. Thus, the BBC televised more than 13 hours of the 1954 World Cup, with full live coverage of 5 matches (France-Yugoslavia, England-Belgium, Uruguay-Scotland, Uruguay-West Germany, and the Final Match between West Germany and Hungary), plus 2<sup>nd</sup> halves of three other matches, and excerpts from other games. It was a very important step towards a full coverage of the event, especially if it is considered that it was the very first time that event was scheduled on TV. But in 1954 there were less than 3.5 million households in possession of a TV set in the UK, therefore, even though the televising of the World Cup from Switzerland can be considered a factor contributing to the popularisation of the medium, it cannot be said that it was an event involving the majority of the British population.

After this flying start, the EBU continued its connection with the FIFA, and it was granted the broadcasting of the 1958 World Cup tournament held in Sweden. On that occasion the BBC televised more than 20 hours of football, most of them live. One thing that has to be reported is the ITV's first interest in the competition, with ten hours of transmission dedicated to the tournament. The number of people owning a TV set was growing and growing (in 1958 TV licenses overtook radio ones, and there were about 8 million TV sets around Britain), to

watch the World Cup was becoming a popular event. Just to give the flavour of the particular appeal of the event among the people, it can be interesting to read how those days were recalled by normal people of the Republic of Ireland (the following words regard Dublin, but the idea they give must not be so different from what was happening nearby in Britain):

‘Where Caffrey’s garage is now there were cottages. One of them belonged to Mr Kelly who had the first television set in Terenure (*in the outskirts of Dublin*). He had it in time for the 1958 World Cup and he positioned the telly in such a place that when the front door was opened it could be viewed by anybody passing by. A crowd of people came from all around to watch the match on Mr Kelly’s television.’<sup>4</sup>

In 1962 there was no live television because the tournament was played in Chile and satellite transmission was still experimental (pictures from Chile were sent to Europe via a special Air service). But that does not mean that the interest of the television networks in covering the event was lower. As a matter of fact, in spite of all the trouble caused by the distance, the BBC, for instance, scheduled about 18 hours of filmed football, most of them in prime time. Both British football and television were looking forward expectantly to 1966.

### **The 1966 World Cup starts in 1961**

The history of the television broadcasting of the 1966 Football World Cup begins a long time in advance of the event. This is a characteristic of all the major sporting competition to be televised. Nobody can exactly forecast when a Queen will die or a war will happen. But everyone who is only minimally interested in sports and/or in television knows that there are some sporting events which

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<sup>4</sup> From internet [www.iol.ie/~stjos/terenure2000/social1.htm](http://www.iol.ie/~stjos/terenure2000/social1.htm)



inevitably fall in a period of the year or which take place after precisely regular time-spans. The latter is the case of the two most important sporting competitions, the ones that are able to catch the attention of the world: the Olympic Games and the Football World Cup. And if the IOC is the organiser and rights owner of the Olympics, the Football World Cup is under the control of FIFA.

The 'Official Contract' between FIFA and the EBU for the exclusive rights to televise the 1966 World Cup was signed in Zurich on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1962, along with the contract for exclusive television broadcasting of the forthcoming 1962 competition to be held in Chile in few months. In the opinion of FIFA (which, incidentally, matched the view of the EBU), the 1966 Jules Rimet Cup would be the real turning point in the transformation of the World Cup into a global event. There were two reasons for this: firstly, because of the growth of the world-wide television audience<sup>5</sup>; secondly, because England was the country that, USA apart, had the best TV organisation and facilities, and it was very likely that there would be a real chance to offer really well made coverage. Thus, given these considerations, the FIFA offered the EBU<sup>6</sup> the chance to bet on this horse of unknown potential, but with undoubted thoroughbred qualities. The EBU did not need further persuasion. The perks of this bet, compared with the money spent, were to get prestige and, more prosaically and down-to-earth, money back, with

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<sup>5</sup> If at the time the contract was signed the potential audience figures were not so impressive, according to some market investigations they would be much larger in 1966 (see Table 2).

<sup>6</sup> Europe was the continent more interested in football, and all the major West-European TV networks were members of the EBU. All the East-European networks were members of Intervision, the international TV network of Eastern Europe TV stations, which was not rich enough to face the cost of such an operation. The TV networks of South America, the other part of the world where football was very successful, were not united under a single organisation, and anyway it would be very unlikely that a South American network could mount such an effort.

the dawning chance of good revenue from selling the broadcast throughout the world.

The FIFA opened negotiations with the EBU late in 1961, suggesting proposals for a joint 'Chile 1962-England 1966' contract. The idea of the FIFA was to undersell the television rights for the Chile tournament to the EBU, with the real aim to close the negotiation for the 1966 tournament as soon and as remuneratively as possible. The reasons putting a low estimate on the 1962 World Cup broadcasting rights were:

a) the television coverage of the championship in Chile would be necessarily troubled, due to the objective difficulty of obtaining TV material and to the delay in showing pictures of the matches in Europe because of the geographical distance (satellite transmission was still experimental) and of the time zone;

b) as a consequence of the first point, the chance to get good revenue from the sale of the television rights to any network were quite unlikely;

c) the time before the event to be held in Chile was running short.

When the negotiation started, the first request by the FIFA valued the 1962 World Cup recording and film rights as worth \$100,000<sup>7</sup>; thereafter, as a consequence of the acceptance of this request, the EBU would get an option for unrestricted 'live' television, film and recording rights for the 1966 World Cup matches at a fee of £300,000 (the equivalent of about \$800,000). As in every negotiation commanding respect, the EBU's offer was obviously lower. It was the view of the EBU that the maximum offer for Chile should be \$75,000 and no

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<sup>7</sup> £1= \$2.7 about – Spring 1962.



more than £250,000 on an option basis for the rights in England. As Peter Dimmock suggested in writing to the Director of the BBC Television Broadcasting on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1961,

‘at the moment, EBU is in a strong position to push this home because of FIFA’s anxiety to get some finance out of Eurovision (its largest single customer) for the Chile Championship.’<sup>8</sup>.

He was right. The negotiations did not last long, and four months later, on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1962 both contracts were signed. The eventual economic terms were a compromise between the contenders’ bids: \$75,000 for Chile ’62 (as offered by EBU), and £300,000 for England ’66 (as asked by FIFA).

### **Read carefully before signing!**

As already pointed out, the two agreements were signed on the same day and at the same venue; consequently, though the 1966 contract was made up of ten articles whereas the 1962 one was only of six, most of the parts were very similar. For instance, practically identical are: both Articles 1 (apart from the references to the place and the date of the World Cups in question), in which the FIFA recognises free broadcasting rights to all the EBU members; part of both Articles 2, in which the terms are stated for using material to be shown within regularly scheduled news bulletins; Article 5 of 1962 and Article 9 of 1966, in which the use of live and deferred transmissions is regulated; and Article 6 of 1962 and 10 of 1966, about the denial of any kind of advertising to third parties. All the other articles differ slightly from each other but only because of the

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<sup>8</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3266/1 – 12 December 1961, Dimmock to Director TV.

different location and situation of the two championships, as well as because of the different economic terms related to the two contracts.

Regarding the 1966 agreement, there are some articles that are particularly interesting and that are worth highlights. About the organisational side of broadcasting, Article 4 says:

‘the EBU or its Appointed Agent alone is hereby authorised to effect by its own means and, if necessary, by those other broadcasting organisations the visual and sound coverage for the broadcasts contemplated in this agreement at all the stadia where matches will be played (...) the EBU or its Appointed Agent and the FIFA represented by the Football Association of England, (...) shall as soon as may be possible prepare and agree a plan for the technical operation of television of the championships.’<sup>9</sup>.

About the role of TV in the scheduling of the matches, Article 5 says:

‘a) In the case of the 1/8 finals not more than four matches shall be played on any day and, if there are more than two, arrangements shall be made to stagger the K.O. times of the others and to ensure that the playing times do not overlap so that no more than two matches of the 1/8 finals shall be played at any one time on any day. b) In the case of the Quarter finals not more than two of the four matches shall be played on any day and the K.O. times of these matches shall be staggered and steps taken to ensure that actual playing times do not overlap<sup>10</sup>. c) In the case of the semi-finals only one shall be played on one day.’<sup>11</sup>.

And Article 6 adds:

‘The overall dates and details of organisation of the 1966 World Championships shall be made known to the EBU not later than March 31<sup>st</sup> 1963 (...) The FIFA and the Football Association of England will collaborate with EBU or its Appointed Agent to work out dates for the 1966 Championships which shall be acceptable to all authorities concerned.’<sup>12</sup>.

Art. 6 gave the EBU and its appointed agents the chance to know well in advance dates and hours of the matches, so to possibly intervene if those were not

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<sup>9</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3266/1 – ‘Contract FIFA/EBU- World Football Championships 1966’. It is possible to see the whole Contract in the Appendix.

<sup>10</sup> But this point will not be kept in consideration, given that all the four Quarter Final matches were played on the same day, July 23, 1966.

<sup>11</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3266/1 – ‘Contract FIFA/EBU- World Football Championships 1966’.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



considered suitable with television needs. Thus, it happened that, in order to suit TV requirements, there were changes for some matches to be played at Wembley Stadium. The changes were intended to 'avoid the showing on television of England's matches at the same time when other Eighth Final matches were being played, whereby the revenue from those matches might be reduced'<sup>13</sup>, but also to have the chance to televise more of some matches, given the fact there would no longer be overlapping. The matches in question were the Opening match, which was shifted from the original date, Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July, to Monday 11<sup>th</sup>; the Mexico-England match, with the alteration of the kick-off time from 3 p.m. to 7.30pm; the Mexico-Uruguay one, with the alteration of the kick-off time from 7.30pm to 4.30pm. In this last case the alteration was evidently responding to the television necessity of broadcasting at least one match in the afternoon, given that there were other three matches scheduled in the evening.

Finally, about advertising, Article 10 states:

'The FIFA agrees not to use any of the television broadcasts and not to authorise or permit them to be used by third parties either directly or indirectly for the purpose of advertising any commercial product before, during and after the television broadcasts.'<sup>14</sup>.

Those were the main points of the Contract. The next step was to turn everything into reality.

### **An odd partnership**

In some of the articles from the FIFA/EBU contracts, there was often mention of the 'Appointed Agent' of the EBU. The 'Appointed Agent' was the

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<sup>13</sup> FA Archive, 'World Cup Organising Committee Minutes', 9 March 1965.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

network in charge of acting on behalf of EBU in organising the broadcasting arrangements for the competition. Therefore, it was quite consequential that this 'Appointed Agent' would be very likely to be the TV network of the hosting country. But in the case of England there was the peculiar situation of two national television services, being the BBC the public one and ITV the private one, both of them operating nationwide and both of them being full members of the EBU. As a consequence the two networks had equal rights for asking the European Broadcasting Union that they should be the 'Appointed Agent'.

The BBC had an obvious interest in the broadcasting of the World Cup. Since the dawn of television in Britain, the BBC, with its OB department, had always traditionally been the network for broadcasting major sporting events as well as the ceremonial and national events. The World Cup was both a major sporting event and a national occasion (and it would become official, given the presence of the Queen for the opening and closing ceremonies), and so it seemed obvious to the BBC headquarters that they would assume the whole responsibility for broadcasting the competition on behalf of the EBU.

But in England there was the rising star of ITV, the first national commercial network, which, with the production of serials as popular and successful as *Crossroads* (broadcast since 1964 till 1988) and, most of all, *Coronation Street* (since 1960) had become a serious threaten to the authority of the BBC as well as a good source for fuelling the competition, so as to give new impulse to the development of TV production in Britain. In the case of the Football World Cup, the organisational costs for undertaking such broadcasting,



the lack of a department comparable to the BBC Sports department led by Brian Cowgill, as well as the programming policy, which was not aimed at scheduling too much sport, were factors against the possibility of ITV asking the EBU to be its appointed agent network. Nevertheless, the chance to defeat the BBC on its own ground, or at least to display to the British audience that the commercial network, in spite of its minority status, could do as well as the BBC, added to the fact that, within the EBU, ITV had the same rights as the BBC to be an EBU agent network<sup>15</sup>, was a much too appetising a call not to be taken up. However, facing such a tough task alone would probably be unaffordable to ITV and this led the private television network to a milder as well as wiser decision, which was to deal with the BBC in the hope of obtaining a sort of collaboration in broadcasting the tournament.

Negotiations began, and in January 1963 ITV confirmed the wish to join with the BBC in a Consortium 'on the understanding that both the BBC and Independent Television would have full and equal rights to broadcast from any venues without restriction'<sup>16</sup>. The BBC, well aware that a prestige event of this kind needed high standard facilities and coverage, displayed a sensible attitude and considered the request favourably.

In the event both the competitors got what they were looking for via a new and unpredictable way. On 8<sup>th</sup> August 1963 a new creature was born:

'A Television Consortium consisting of the BBC and the Independent Television Companies was set up (...) acting as agent for E.B.U. (...)

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<sup>15</sup> Both ITV, with their Companies Association, and the BBC were full members of EBU.

<sup>16</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3264/1 – 20 April 1964.

responsible for provision and operation of all the facilities and services for world television coverage.’<sup>17</sup>.

This meant that the two competitors were now allied for the good of the country, given that

‘The Championship is a great event for England and (...) making as many television facilities as possible available to TV organisations round the world, it is acting as a valuable ‘shop window’ for this country.’<sup>18</sup>.

Nevertheless that did not necessarily mean that the BBC and ITV would give up looking after their own interests, as Peter Dimmock would say at the press conference on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1966 at which the Consortium plans were presented:

‘Although we shall be operating as a Consortium in the Overseas and European sense, we shall have different commentators, and sometimes different matches for our domestic output and so that part of our presentation in the United Kingdom will still be competitive.’<sup>19</sup>.

As an example of this different attitude, as it will be presented more in detail later in analysing the domestic programming of the World Cup on both channels, while the BBC dedicated more than 50 hours of its programming to the World Cup, ITV cut their coverage down to about 20 hours. Moreover, on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1966, while the BBC was broadcasting the whole opening ceremony before the kick-off of the championship’s first match, guest star Queen Elizabeth II, ITV transmitted the usual Monday episode of ‘Coronation Street’, only advanced by half an hour<sup>20</sup>.

Despite the fact that the final achievement of the Consortium was quite positive, in fact there were some work-in-progress troubles. Apart from the predictable technical difficulty to organise such a mammoth broadcasting

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<sup>17</sup> BBC WAC, T14/1426 – ‘Television Operation Report by BBC/ITV’.

<sup>18</sup> BBC WAC, E12/1002/1 – 6 January 1966.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> At 6.55pm rather than at 7.30pm as usual.



operation, the most serious problem that the Consortium had to face was when ITV threatened their withdrawal in the spring of 1964.

On 10<sup>th</sup> April 1964 ITV made two requests that had to be granted if it was to remain in the Consortium. Firstly, that the EBU had to accept the payment of the technical costs created by their requirements, changing the usual practice that the host organisation offers coverage to other Eurovision members without asking them to share those costs. The BBC, as an EBU full member, had benefited over the years from many major events, including the Rome Olympic Games from RAI in 1960 and the Innsbruck Winter Olympic Games from ORF in 1964, free of any technical charge. Secondly, the BBC had to agree to a division of the 1/8 and 1/4 final matches on a first choice basis, abandoning the originally agreed project of sharing equal access to all the matches. The two requests were addressed to two different interlocutors, and sounded almost like an ultimatum. Regarding the first point, ITV was partially supported by the BBC. The BBC suggested that the EBU should not be charged for any technical facility up to the cost magnitude figure of £370,000, which was the estimated budget, but that it should economically help the Consortium in the case the actual cost exceeded the estimate. The EBU Programme Committee met at Lausanne on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1964 and formed a special group to consider ITV's demand, but met with strong opposition from the other member networks and the request was eventually rejected.

In relation to the second point, the position of the BBC was immediately quite clear. A sharing system of the matches to be broadcast would have to be governed by the toss of a coin, and it could happen that the loser would televise

only one England match in the 1/8 finals stage, the only stage that was certain to see the England team as protagonists, as well as other important games. Besides, sharing this unique outside broadcast event could create a useful precedent for ITV to secure the coverage of other major outside broadcast events 'on an alternate and, if possible, exclusive basis'. After these two rejections ITV formally withdrew from the Consortium on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1964<sup>21</sup>.

But already early in May, which means only a few days later, the ITA, through the authoritative voice of its Deputy General Director, Bernard Sendall, unofficially stated to the BBC that:

'a) The ITV Companies have now withdrawn their demand for EBU to pay any technical costs. b) The ITV Companies would probably be willing to rejoin the Consortium if the BBC is prepared to agree that one match on each playing day up to and including the quarter finals could be "exclusive" alternately to the BBC and ITV.'<sup>22</sup>

Besides, it was noted that 'the ITA is anxious for the ITV Companies to rejoin the Consortium for prestige and practical reasons'. The BBC answered that, although ITV could be sure that the BBC would not transmit World Cup matches simultaneously on BBC1 and BBC2, and that they would be willing to negotiate a figure of less than 50% as ITV's share of the total technical costs, it did not seem necessary for the BBC to make any further concessions<sup>23</sup>. As Peter Dimmock harshly stated,

'in case ITV try to make some mischievous capital out of their withdrawal from the World Cup Consortium by accusing the BBC of a lack of consideration of the public interest, (...) as ITV have always tried to argue that their exclusive showing scheme was in the best public interest in allowing the viewer a choice between football on one channel and an alternative programme on the other, (...) the BBC with two channels can

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<sup>21</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/3265/1.

<sup>22</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3265/1 – May 1964, Sendall to the BBC.

<sup>23</sup> See BBC WAC, T14/3265/1.



provide an equally valid alternative by giving the sporting public the best of this unique World Cup competition without ever showing football simultaneously on BBC-1 & BBC-2.’<sup>24</sup>.

Despite this unsuccessful campaign, ITV eventually decided to rejoin the Consortium.

### Of men and money

The staff operating within the Consortium, which during the championship occupied four floors of a new spur at BBC’s Television Centre at Shepherd’s Bush<sup>25</sup>, involved the following staff:

Consortium Management Committee: 2 (BBC: 1 + ITV: 1)  
Operations Committee: 6 (3 + 3)  
Production: 90 (47 + 43)  
Administration: 60 (51 + 9)  
Engineering: 292 (201 + 91)<sup>26</sup>.

So, there were a total of 450 people looking after the successful result of the operation, with a predominant presence of the BBC staff. This major effort by the BBC, especially regarding administration and engineering staff, was the consequence of the Operation Centre based at the BBC Television Centre. If all the commentators, experts and other people involved more or less directly in the broadcasting of the matches are added to those figures, we can trust the *Daily*

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<sup>24</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3264/1 – 4 May 1964.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Everything is new and the building has an air of opulence and efficiency. There are six large technical areas, in one of which I counted 24 23in screen monitors, to which pictures from the eight grounds will be fed.’, *Daily Telegraph*, 4 July 1966 (10).

<sup>26</sup> Chairman was Peter Dimmock of the BBC; Deputy Chairman was John McMillan of ITV; Executive Producers were Alan Chivers of the BBC and Grahame Turner of ITV; General Liaison Executive was Bruce Bell of the BBC; Co-ordinating engineers were David Ovenden of the BBC and Basil Bultitude of ITV; an unknown Secretary was supplied by ITV. Data from: BBC/ITV Consortium, ‘Television Operation Report’, in BBC WAC, T14/1426; and BBC WAC, T14/3272/1 – 6 January 1966.

*Telegraph* reporter who writes that ‘altogether the consortium, (...), employs 750 people’<sup>27</sup>.

About the money spent by the Consortium, the research could only produce data relating to the estimated cost of the whole operation, given that it was not possible to find any final economic statement. According to the archive material available, the estimated cost of the overall production was about £370,000<sup>28</sup>. Except for the EBU fee<sup>29</sup> and the expenditure to arrange the regional commentator’s offices<sup>30</sup>, all costs were shared equally between the two members of the Consortium. So the BBC’s estimate of cost was £195,000 and ITV’s £175,000. The highest figures within the estimate were related to commentators’ equipment, units and monitors’ costs (£114,000 to be equally shared), the EBU contract fee (£34,180 for the BBC, £18,400 for ITV), the World Cup Television Operations Centre (£81,245 to be shared), sound and vision circuits (£28,225 to be shared), grounds arrangements (£12,706 to be shared), and regional commentators’ offices and information centres (£4,385 for the BBC and £3,715 for ITV). Minor costs involved brochure issuing, hospitality, travel and duty expenditures, and the broadcast office at White City<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 4 July 1966 (10). Furthermore it must be said that at the BBC Television Centre there were operating staffs of foreign organisations (from Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Spain, and the United Arab Republic) too, which were allocated offices over there.

<sup>28</sup> £371,053 to be precise. – BBC WAC, T14/3266/1. Table 1 shows the detail of the Consortium estimate of cost.

<sup>29</sup> According to the Rossi scale the British members’ fee was of 20 units, of which the BBC had to pay 13/20ths and ITV the remaining 7/20ths. See BBC WAC, T14/3266/1.

<sup>30</sup> While ITV could provide accommodation on its own premises, BBC was unable to do so and was consequently obliged to find similar accommodation in hotels or University buildings.

<sup>31</sup> Data from BBC WAC, T14/3266/1.



Those figures could be defined as really considerable and quite hard to afford. But it was not going to be a no-profit investment: neither EBU nor BBC/ITV were willing to play the role of the Good Samaritan. In fact it was hoped to get a good profit from the sale of films and videotape recordings to organisations other than the EBU. As stated in the FIFA/EBU contract, the fees of these possible sales were to be shared between the FIFA and the EBU on a 50:50 basis, after having deducted operational costs. And, according to the internal EBU shares, the BBC would receive about 1/6<sup>th</sup> of this revenue, while ITV would have about 1/14<sup>th</sup>.

To keep the non-recoverable cost of the operation as low as possible, it was intended to use specific technical equipment that would be later required for more normal purposes. Equally, whenever any equipment was specially designed, it was designed so as to be adapted for any future possible use. Besides, the EBU lent to the Consortium seven multi-track recorders, that had been formerly purchased for the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games, and ninety sets of commentary equipment were borrowed from five EBU members.<sup>32</sup>

### **Where to play?**

The choice of the grounds on which World Cup matches would be played was one of the most important decisions within the whole organisation of the competition. When the FA and the Organising Committee had to take the final decision regarding this point, several issues had to be given serious consideration.

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<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately it proved impossible to look through the figures of the final revenue, even though it is possible to guess that the economic success of the operation must have been very likely.

First of all, a ground with a capacity below 50,000 spectators would not be big enough to host such an important championship; at the time of the decision there were 18 venues in England that met this requirement. Secondly, seating capacity was another important factor, given that the majority of the spectators coming from overseas were used to this kind of facility. This was a major problem, because most of the grounds had been built around the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century or the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, offering standing accommodation against seating in the ratio of about four to one. Thirdly, the size of the playing area was a factor not to be overlooked. The FIFA regulations decreed that World Cup matches had to be played on pitches 115 yards long and 75 yards wide. Many English pitches did not match this requirement; besides, it was impossible for them to be enlarged without facing high costs and heavy alterations to the structure of the grounds.

Last, but not least, the provision of enough room to allocate mass-media facilities was a factor of vital importance. As Harold Mayes, Press and Publicity Officer of the World Cup Organising Committee, wrote in the FA official report on the World Cup, this kind of necessity was ‘an automatic requirement with the present-day scale of world coverage of major sporting events by press, radio, and television’. So, even if a stadium met all the requirements save this one, if it was not capable of ready conversion for the accommodation of the media, then, ‘all of the other facilities it might possess would be of little value’<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Mayes, Harold, *The Football Association World Cup Report 1966*, London: 1966, p. 20.



Therefore, when the final decision was taken, television was one of the key factors. It can be said that for the first time in the history of major football events, television was considered like one of the necessary conditions within the whole organisation of the event itself. That did not necessarily mean that TV would be as fundamental as the footballs or the players, but, in the eyes of the organisers, the event would not have been as successful as it eventually was if there was no television broadcasting.

At the end of this selection process, in November 1962 the following grounds were selected: Goodison Park (Everton F.C.) at Liverpool; Old Trafford (Manchester United F.C.) at Manchester; St James's Park (Newcastle United F.C.) at Newcastle; Roker Park (Sunderland F.C.) at Sunderland; Villa Park (Aston Villa F.C.) at Birmingham; Hillsborough (Sheffield Wednesday F.C.) at Sheffield; Empire Stadium at Wembley; Highbury (Arsenal F.C.) at London<sup>34</sup>. Incidentally, in spite of two years of selections, these ground were exactly the ones that had been mentioned two years before by Denis Follows immediately after that England had been awarded the organisation of the championship, as reported by the press: 'Mr. Follows, the English delegate (...) said that the games could be played in such cities as London, Manchester, Sheffield, Liverpool, Newcastle, Sunderland, and Birmingham.'<sup>35</sup>

But in the event two of those grounds had to be ruled out: Highbury, because the pitch was five-and-a-half yards short of the FIFA requirement and it was

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<sup>34</sup> There were two reserves, too: Stoke City and Bristol City.

<sup>35</sup> *The Times*, 23 August 1960 (4d).

impossible to get the additional length<sup>36</sup>; and St James's Park, because of problems related to the renewal of the lease contract by Newcastle United F.C., the club not owning the ground. The two grounds were respectively replaced by the White City Stadium in London and Ayresome Park (Middlesbrough F.C.).

Once the grounds had been selected, the second part of the operation, the one regarding the 'make up' of the venues, began. From the early stages in late 1962, the Organising Committee, in inspecting the grounds, took in the highest consideration the importance of working along with the media representatives:

'The requirements of the Press, Radio and Television at the various grounds which the Secretary had visited were outlined. (...) It was suggested that representatives should visit the grounds and tell the Club management what additional facilities they would wish to have for the World Cup Matches.'<sup>37</sup>.

The first round of inspections was conducted in the presence of Denis Follows, FA chairman, during the period between 22<sup>nd</sup> January and 18<sup>th</sup> February 1963, in order to assess the television and radio facilities available in each instance. These visits to the grounds were paid with the participation of a group representing both the BBC and ITV, which at that time were still unaware of the future arrangements that would lead to the birth of the 'Consortium' appointed by the EBU in order to look after the TV broadcasting<sup>38</sup>. Following those preliminary visits, further inspections and surveys were held throughout 1964.

One of the main aims of these visits was to assess the allocation of cameras at each ground. Since the beginning, a minimum of nine camera positions was

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<sup>36</sup> Goodison Park, the second best ground after Wembley, had to face the same kind of problem being four-and-a-half yards short as well as two yards narrower than the required width, and it could be accepted only provided there was considerable financial outlay for lengthening and widening the playing area.

<sup>37</sup> FA Archive, 'World Cup Organising Committee Minutes', 10 December 1962.

<sup>38</sup> A BBC Sound staff was present too. Radio was always kept in the highest consideration during the preparation of the tournament, too.



requested: three 'live' cameras to provide both for live television broadcasting and video tape recording; four 16mm film cameras for the benefit of those countries who could not take live broadcasting; two camera positions to be available to the BBC News department and ITV News.

This first planning developed and enlarged as time went by, to reach a definitive layout only on the occasion of the World Cup matches. At every ground, but Wembley, there was installed a single 4-camera unit, either BBC's or ITV's<sup>39</sup>. A high platform opposite the centre line, on which there was room to accommodate eight cameras, two electronic and six film, was specially built at every venue. The two electronic cameras allocated on this platform were placed for general coverage of play. One further electronic camera was placed on a lower platform, again opposite the centre line and directly below the main one (better if over the player's tunnel), for incidents (goal scorers, fouls, injuries, etc) by using maximum close-up. Space for a further platform for 8 film cameras was also provided at every ground. The allocation of these film positions was as follows: 2 for domestic organisations (1 BBC, 1 ITV); 2 for each TV service of the two competing teams; 2 for the World Cup Television Newsreel Pool; 2 for the commercial company producing the official FA film. In every case there was a fourth electronic camera in the 'Interview Room'. A system was devised to conduct interviews with managers of the competing team in a special 'Interview Room', where the interviews would be carried out by television commentators, by a journalist from each of the competing countries, and by one journalist on behalf

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<sup>39</sup> The BBC units were placed at Goodison Park, Ayresome Park, Hillsborough; ITV units were at Villa Park, Old Trafford, Roker Park and White City.

of the British press. Those interviews would be relayed live by CCTV to the Press Working Room, so as to allow the press not to be denied the information they needed, as well as for normal television broadcasting (for security reasons it had been decided that under no circumstances would newsmen be given access to dressing rooms). Finally, in the case of Wembley Stadium, the two members of the Consortium installed two completely independent sets of OB equipment. The BBC unit was the biggest, consisting of 9 cameras to feed the BBC domestic services and all the international organisations. ITV installed 7 cameras, feeding ITV domestic services and available to be ready for the world coverage in case of a major breakdown of a BBC unit.

### **‘They think it’s all over...’**

TV is not only made of pictures. When some of us remember images of an unforgettable sporting event, we recall those images also because of the sounds and the words that are linked with them. For an England fan the third England goal of the 1966 World Cup Final is as strongly remembered as the famous Wolstenholme sentence which accompanied the fourth, ‘*They think it’s all over... it is now*’, as well as every Italian, in recalling the 1982 triumph, has in his or her mind both the mad and joyful exulting run of Tardelli and the moving ‘*Campioni del Mondo!*’<sup>40</sup> pronounced three times by Nando Martellini<sup>41</sup> after the final whistle. In sports TV broadcasting the commentary is almost as important as the pictures.

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<sup>40</sup> ‘World Champions!’

<sup>41</sup> The RAI television commentator who commentated on the 1982 World Cup Final.



This was quite clear to the Consortium from the very beginning of the operation, and the preparation of the commentary positions was carried out as meticulously as possible. At the earliest stages the estimated requirements for commentary cubicles were as follows: 1/8 finals: 15 positions; 1/4 finals: 20 positions; Semi-Finals, Third Place Final, Final: 30 positions. But at that stage this was just a hypothesis based on the experience of previous World Cups and on a 'guesstimate' of the possible competing countries. The estimated growth in television since the 1958 World Cup played in Sweden was also taken into account (the 1962 Chile competition could not provide any clues as there had not been live television).

So, to have a clearer idea, in December 1964 the BBC Audience Research department was asked to make a survey of the potential overseas audience, assessing the actual receivers in use at that time and the potential audience for the 1966 World Cup<sup>42</sup>. According to these figures the growth of the potential audience was very strong in Western Europe (particularly in France, Italy, Norway, Spain and Yugoslavia), interesting in Eastern Europe (especially in Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland), stagnant in the rest of the World. However, both the EBU and the Consortium were most interested in the European audience, the one more accustomed to watch televised football, which was growing faster and faster. This suggested that a huge amount of facilities and devices would be needed to televise the matches from the various grounds.

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<sup>42</sup> Table 2 gives the complete result of that survey.

Anyway, in spite of this useful and detailed survey, at that distance of time it was obviously quite difficult to determine with any degree of accuracy the needs of the world's television and radio organisations, especially when 14 of the 16 competing finalists were still unknown<sup>43</sup>. So, in order to assess a statement of their possible participation and provisional requirements, the world's television organisations were sent two 'Questionnaires' (in May 1964 and in January 1966). Nonetheless, the information obtained was far from giving a complete picture of the situation and could only approximately indicate if the earlier estimate had been correct. Anyway, only minor changes were carried out from January 1966 up to July in order to meet those possible requirements. Moreover, in spite of the fact that the FIFA/EBU Contract had been signed in 1962, some television organisations, especially from Intervision, were still negotiating with FIFA and the BBC (acting on behalf of the Consortium) even beyond the start of the tournament. On the other hand it has to be said that several TV Organisations, such as the Spanish, Mexican, Brazilian and both German ones, sent representatives to England during the preparation period for detailed discussions, greatly assisting the Consortium in meeting their requirements.

After the analysis of all these factors, a likely minimum figure of commentary positions, at least for the 1/8 finals, had to be assumed, in order to provide the FA and the clubs concerned with some indication of the amount of space necessary for television and radio purposes. The figure of thirty positions (15 each for television and radio) was suggested. Each individual commentary

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<sup>43</sup> Only England, as host country, and Brazil, as current holders of the Cup, were sure to play the final series.



position would be allowed an area of about 24 square feet to accommodate the commentator, his assistant, engineering and production staff and all technical equipment. But the settling of the situation in a definitive way had to be delayed until the picture of the participating teams was clear. After an analysis of the result of the draw and of the second questionnaire regarding the international television organisations interested in following the matches, the final re-allocation was made.

The allocation of the positions did not always match the capacity of the grounds. Particularly disappointing are the figures of Sheffield and Middlesbrough, where less than 50% of the positions available were allocated. But this is not a fault of the organising television authorities, which, on the contrary, have to be congratulated for the facilities made available to foreign organisations, especially if in consideration of the considerable sacrifice of space otherwise destined for ordinary seats<sup>44</sup>.

Finally, on the subject of commentary control points, equipment and technical staff, it is interesting to note the important help given to the Consortium by the other Eurovision members. Italian RAI supplied equipment at Everton's ground, Finnish YLE equipment and staff at Manchester, Swedish SR equipment and staff at Middlesbrough, Swiss SRG equipment and staff at Sheffield, and French ORTF equipment at Sunderland. That was a real example of 'Pool Operation'.

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<sup>44</sup> On an average, each cubicle occupied a space equivalent to nine ordinary stand seats.

## An 'outstanding' operation

Were all the facilities allocated by the Consortium appreciated and useful? Were all the cameras capable of producing good and clear pictures? Was it a good technical job? There were, as expected, shortcomings and drawbacks, which were immediately and ruthlessly spotted and underlined by the representatives of the foreign organisations:

‘The sudden change of cameras in critical phases of a game was very disturbing, especially in Birmingham.’ – *A.R.D.*, West Germany.

‘With the exception of Wembley the co-ordination circuits between BBC Centre and the outside venues like Sunderland, Birmingham, and Liverpool which we used, were very poor on sound quality and sometimes I couldn’t hear the other party. (...) Talking about production, I consider that too much close-up technique was used in the games.’ – *Telesistema Mexicano*, Mexico.

‘Since we had to do our commentary off-tube from London we were rather hampered by the prevailing close-ups and narrow pictures. Watching the four screens from the various grounds at the same time in the off-tube room, we could clearly state a marked difference in production.’ – *N.R.K.*, Norway.<sup>45</sup>

But those could be considered mistakes that could be defined as inescapable in such a demanding operation, especially if we think of the huge technical and organisational effort that the Consortium had to make. In fact the eventual appreciation of the technical production was widespread, and we can read the following declarations of esteem, some of which are from the same sides that had pinpointed the defects:

‘Appreciation of the perfect co-ordination of all services, from efficiency of staff to excellent equipment resulting in very good material for exhibition abroad.’ – *Diarios Associados*, Brazil.

‘I have been in the job for more than 30 years, and I admire the BBC and ITV for a perfect arrangement and an outstanding organisation and service.’ – *Denmark Radio and Television*.

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<sup>45</sup> Quotations from BBC/ITV Consortium, *Television Operation Report*, in BBC WAC, T14/1426.



‘As a whole we really must say that the organisation was perfect and that the service we had during the three weeks of the event was outstanding.’ – *N.T.S.*, Holland.

‘The general quality of both technical and producing aspects were very good, in a high standard of professional work, and human behaviour to our people.’ – *Telesistema Mexicano*, Mexico<sup>46</sup>.

The most explanatory demonstration of the general appreciation of the technical side of the Football World Cup Broadcasting Operation, however, is probably the one made by the French newspaper *Le Figaro*:

‘We shall only know the winner of this Eighth World Cup on the 30<sup>th</sup> July, but here and now the great golden plaque of F.I.F.A. could be awarded to those responsible for the television transmissions. They are really people who unquestionably know their business (technically speaking) and who love sport and adore football. It will no longer be possible for us to watch a televised football match other than through the eyes of the English cameras.’ – *Figaro*, 21/7/66<sup>47</sup>.

### World Cup in colour

‘Moves are afoot for coverage of the World Cup Final by BBC colour cameras’<sup>48</sup>. With these words Peter Dimmock stated how, just two months before the opening of the championships, ‘the greatest show on Earth’, the BBC tried to exploit the broadcasting operation of the event to promote the BBC2 colour project (ITV, the other member of the Consortium, was obviously not interested in this operation, which was only in the hands only of the BBC)<sup>49</sup>.

In fact it was a bit late to start thinking about this project, given the technical difficulties implied in such a pioneer undertaking. But Dimmock, thanks to a partnership with the US television network NBC and the ‘Express Group’,

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3271/5 – 9 May 1966.

<sup>49</sup> As already said, BBC2 broadcast the first colour programme in July 1967, with the official opening in December of the same year.

was quite optimistic about this new exciting development of the operation. The idea was to broadcast live colour pictures of the World Cup Final to NBC via the 'Early Bird' satellite; similarly, a feed of the coverage would be available, through closed circuit television, to the Odeon Leicester Square Cinema, to be shown on a large screen under the responsibility of the 'Daily Express' group as well as the 'Rank Organisation'<sup>50</sup>. The costs of such facilities at Wembley would be paid by NBC, while the cost of the projection at the Odeon Cinema would be met by the 'Daily Express'. Two birds with a single stone: on the one hand it would be possible, thanks to the NBC live colour broadcast, to show the world how the BBC was ready to take the lead in colour outside broadcasting; on the other hand, the projection to one cinema in London would be a very useful means of advertising the forthcoming launch of BBC2 colour to the domestic audience. Moreover, not only was there the opportunity not to face any additional cost for the installation of colour television cameras at Wembley, but, given the necessity of a new contract between the NBC and the FIFA, there would be the possibility for the EBU, owner of the broadcasting rights, and, through it, the BBC to get further revenue. But unfortunately, as often happens, in the event things did not work out as well as was hoped. Let us see the reasons that prevented the BBC from broadcasting an outside production in colour for the first time.

At the very beginning there were two main technical problems. The first one was related to the installation of colour television cameras at Wembley stadium, but with an extra-effort of the BBC technical staff that difficulty could be

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<sup>50</sup> 'Rank Organisation' was the company owner of the cinema in question.



relatively easily overcome. It was the second problem that was more difficult to face. The 'Philips Eidophor' screen, which was the one in use at the Odeon Cinema, was capable of receiving a 625 line 60 cycle picture only, whereas the satellite transmission to America would have to be on 525 lines 50 cycles. This meant that, barring a miracle, there were only two solutions: 1) to try to obtain projection equipment for the cinema in question that would accept a 525 line transmission (very unlikely); 2) to abandon the American end of the operation (very likely)<sup>51</sup>. In either case the BBC project would lose a big part of its scope. So when problems arose relating to the new contract between the NBC and the FIFA, it was decided to abandon the idea of a live colour broadcasting by the NBC. The idea of showing CCTV colour pictures at the Odeon Leicester Square Cinema was, however, still pursued. But there was a problem, which was not technical but of a diplomatic and legal nature. During a meeting, the *Daily Express* Managing Director John Coote took the chance to have a chat with Stanley Rous. On that occasion Rous expressed his feeling that 'CEPAS might object' to the project, even if 'contractually they would not have a leg to stand on'<sup>52</sup>. CEPAS was the French company that held the cinema rights of the competition and was preparing a colour film of the World Cup<sup>53</sup>. So, given that the BBC wanted to put live closed circuit presentation at one cinema at least, the opinion of Rous was that the BBC and the 'Daily Express' group 'should have CEPAS' consent before proceeding'<sup>54</sup>. New clouds were gathering over the

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<sup>51</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3271/5 – 18 May 1966, Dimmock to Coote.

<sup>52</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3271/5 – 22 June 1966.

<sup>53</sup> The one that was called *Goal!* and that remains in the memories of many England fans.

<sup>54</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3271/5 – 22 June 1966.

possibility of colour broadcasting. If, up to that moment, there was a chance to have colour pictures at least at one cinema in London, if not in the US too, soon nothing would remain of those bold schemes.

First of all, the additional cost to install colour cameras at Wembley went up to about £4,000. If it would not be possible to feed live colour pictures to America, because of the different system as it has been explained above, all that money would have to be charged to the BBC (and not to the BBC/ITV Consortium, given that ITV was not involved in this project). This was much for the Corporation. Nor were the 'Daily Express' and the 'Rank Organisation' likely to bear it. Besides, the most important obstacle, CEPAS, despite a negotiation that Alan Chivers, Executive Producer of BBC TV, was trying to undertake, were firm in their refusal to allow the project.

To summarise, at this stage the picture of the situation is:

a) the BBC wants live colour pictures of the World Cup Final both to be shown at one cinema in London (Odeon Leicester Square) through CCTV, and to be broadcast live in the USA through satellite transmission to the NBC; although, technical problems impede the simultaneity of aiming at both targets;

b) the cost of installation of colour cameras is quite high and neither the BBC nor its partners in this project, the *Daily Express* and 'Rank Organisations', want to pay it;

c) CEPAS, the company that holds the cinema rights for the whole championship, are absolutely unwilling to give their consent to allow any cinema screening of colour pictures.



It did not seem to be an ideal situation. Even Dimmock and Coote, the two main characters in this play, must have been thinking that it would not be worth trying to carry it out if any further obstacle appeared. So, when on 27<sup>th</sup> June Dimmock wrote to Coote that ‘alas, CEPAS have given Chivers a firm “no” this morning’, he knew that every hope for colour broadcasting was gone: ‘where do we go from here?’<sup>55</sup>. Three days after John Coote replied: ‘I have formally notified the Rank Organisation that we do not intend to proceed with the project of screening the World Cup live at the Odeon Leicester Square’<sup>56</sup>. The dreams of colour broadcasting of the Final match of the World Cup, which would have transformed this outside broadcast into a world record for the BBC, collapsed. The British audience would have to wait two years more to enjoy live colour broadcasting of a major sporting event, at the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games.

### **Ground for advertising**

One of the main, as well as least known, issues regarding the television broadcasting of the 1966 World Cup was related to commercial advertising on the grounds where the matches had to be played. Article 10 of the FIFA/EBU contract clearly stated:

‘the FIFA agrees not to use any of the television broadcasts and not to authorise or permit them to be used by third parties either directly or indirectly for the purpose of advertising any commercial product before, during and after the television broadcasts’<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3271/5 – 27 June 1966, Dimmock to Coote.

<sup>56</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3271/5 – 30 June 1966, Coote to Dimmock.

<sup>57</sup> *Contract FIFA/EBU...*, in BBC WAC, T14/3266/1.

Evidently 1962 was too early for the FIFA to forecast the potentially huge revenue from selling advertising spaces on grounds which would be seen world-wide through television. Less than three years later the FIFA, along with the English FA, would probably regret the impossibility of getting round this article that they would have preferred not to have ever accepted. The opposition of the television authorities was tough and could not be broken.

The first steps of an attempt to change and eventually eliminate Article 10 of the FIFA/EBU Contract by both FIFA and the FA were cautious, and involved evaluating the nature of this possible new revenue before asking the EBU to consider the possibility of accepting ground advertising during the broadcasting of the matches. So, in January 1965, the World Cup Organising Committee agreed that 'a survey of grounds should be conducted in order to ascertain the possible scope and potential revenue of advertising on grounds'<sup>58</sup>. Not much time later, during a meeting held in Zurich in early March, FIFA discussed the question of ground advertising during the World Cup championship. On that occasion it was decided that the organising committee had to make adjustments to the World Cup regulations 'to bring them up-to-date in respect of offers to advertise and publicise international goods in the World Cup stadia during the World Cup matches and to provide some additional revenue'<sup>59</sup>. FIFA's idea was that the income of existing long term contracts already signed between hosting clubs and commercial companies would not be affected, but that receipts from new advertisements would be at the disposal of the World Cup Organising Committee, to be

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<sup>58</sup> FA Archive, 'World Cup Organising Committee Minutes', 26 January 1965.

<sup>59</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3266/1 – 8 March 1965, 'Minutes of FIFA Meeting in Zurich'.



subsequently distributed 'only after consultation with the FA London'<sup>60</sup>, and that 'revenue devised from advertising on grounds would be divisible between the FIFA, The Football Association and the staging Clubs'<sup>61</sup>. Thus, the EBU and the BBC/ITV Consortium were not involved in sharing the possible revenue, at least according to the FIFA and to the Organising Committee. All that was decided, in spite of the presence at the meeting of a numerous delegation from the BBC<sup>62</sup>, and in spite of the strong protest of Peter Dimmock who, speaking on behalf of both the EBU and the Consortium, noted that

'Article 10 of the Agreement EBU/FIFA would be affected and that the proposed additional advertising contracts in the World Cup stadia should be discussed with EBU before any contracts were signed'<sup>63</sup>.

Evidently that protest did not much impress either the FIFA or the Organising Committee. In June 1965, three months after the meeting held in Zurich, while the Organising Committee had already received a survey of potential advertising on World Cup grounds, as well as drawn up a rough plan for the sharing of the revenue<sup>64</sup>, the EBU was not officially involved in the question yet, given that during a meeting of the Organising Committee 'the F.I.F.A. representative agreed to submit to the European Broadcasting Union that the clause in the Television Agreement relating to Ground Advertising should be deleted'<sup>65</sup>. This meant that official steps to get this consent from the EBU had not

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> FA Archive, 'World Cup Organising Committee Minutes', 9 March 1965.

<sup>62</sup> There were present: Peter Dimmock, General Manager BBC TV O.B.; Jack Oaten, Sports Organiser BBC TV; Alan Chivers, Executive Producer BBC TV; Basil Sands, Sales BBC TV Enterprises; Charles Max-Muller, BBC Sound Head of O.B. See: BBC WAC, T14/3266/1 – 8 March 1965, 'Minutes of FIFA Meeting in Zurich'.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> The staging clubs had been offered the 30% of the net advertising revenue.

<sup>65</sup> FA Archive, 'World Cup Organising Committee Minutes', 9 June 1965.

been taken yet. Still in late July, while plans for ground advertising were going ahead, 'a decision was awaited from the F.I.F.A. regarding the easement of the Advertising Clause in the E.B.U. Television Agreement'<sup>66</sup>.

Moreover, if this keeping away from the EBU and the Consortium was not enough, in July 1965 FIFA was trying to get around the regulations arranged with the EBU by dealing with potential advertising contractors without the necessary consent of the television authorities. John McMillan, General Manager of Rediffusion Television Limited as well as Deputy Chairman of the BBC/ITV Consortium, in writing to his colleague Peter Dimmock, worriedly stated:

'A rumour has reached me that F.I.F.A. are selling prominent spaces of at least one<sup>67</sup> of the grounds at which the Football World Cup will be played on the understanding that these spaces will be inescapably observed by television cameras.'<sup>68</sup>.

Peter Dimmock himself, who was well aware of the tricky situation, expressed his fears about the position of the FIFA regarding ground advertising in a letter to George Straschnov, Director of the EBU Legal Affairs:

'While cruising the Mediterranean last week we happened to go ashore at Ponsa where I watched the Italy v. Hungary football match on television. It seemed to me that the far side of the ground had been plastered with two banks of advertisements some of which appeared to have been placed there temporarily because of the television broadcast. (...) It was Sunday the 27<sup>th</sup> June. My main reason for writing to you about it is because FIFA have asked for a formal meeting in London on Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> July. This meeting has been inspired by the Football Association and (...) they are trying to get round Article 10 of the Agreement concerning advertisements at the various grounds.'<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> FA Archive, 'World Cup Organising Committee Minutes', 27 July 1965.

<sup>67</sup> There are good reasons to believe that this ground was the Sheffield Wednesday Football Club's one.

<sup>68</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3266/1 – 13 July 1965, McMillan to Dimmock.

<sup>69</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3266/1 – 5 July 1965, Dimmock to Straschnov.



The level of attention had to be kept high even during a relaxing holiday under the Mediterranean sun!

Finally, when all seemed to be moving in the right direction for the FIFA and the Organising Committee, and ground advertising looked very likely, during a meeting held in Zurich on the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1965, the EBU, absolutely unwilling to be used as mere means for commercial operations advantaging third parties only, rejected the proposed scheme for ground advertising, causing a bitter disappointment for both the hopeful counterparts<sup>70</sup>. The loss of possible revenue was estimated at £100,000. The policy of hoping for the EBU's acceptance in face of a situation already laid out did not pay off.

Nevertheless, from the television authorities' point of view, this loss of possible revenue from the selling of advertising spaces

'showed that the fees paid by television organisations for the transmissions rights of sporting events (not necessarily only football) would probably have to be increased by over 30 per cent if it was wished to exclude advertising'<sup>71</sup>,

as Dimmock would highlight at an EBU meeting held in Copenhagen in October 1965.

In fact, the problem regarding advertisements to be shown during television broadcasting was of a double nature. Firstly, practically all the EBU members were public networks. That meant that their policy was not to show advertising during or between their programmes. Secondly, in the case of a private commercial broadcasting company, as ITV was, the point relating to commercial advertisements was not to show, as far as possible, gratuitous indirect advertising

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<sup>70</sup> FA Archive, 'World Cup Organising Committee Minutes', 28 September 1965.

<sup>71</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3266/1.

by third parties, as banks of advertisements placed on football ground could be. For instance, when the EBU rejected the plan for ground advertising during the World Cup, the Organising Committee was extremely displeased 'particularly in the light of the considerable advertising evident at recently televised Motor Racing events'<sup>72</sup>. Dennis Follows, the FA Secretary, in a letter addressed to Dimmock, underlined how there was clearly visible advertising on the Manchester United ground for an important European Cup tie broadcast on TV<sup>73</sup>. Furthermore, ground advertisements had been quite visible on TV for the televising by the EBU of both the 1954 and 1958 World Cup.

But in the case of the 1966 World Cup it had been possible to negotiate in advance on the question of indirect advertising, and, through Article 10 of the FIFA/EBU Contract, the EBU and all its members prevented third parties from using television broadcasting as 'free of charge' means of publicity<sup>74</sup>. And when it is said 'all its members' it means also the private network ITV, which had in commercials the main source of financial life. As Peter Dimmock pointed out during the press Conference to present the BBC/ITV Consortium plans for the World Cup held early in 1966,

'I.T.V. are just as much against gratuitous advertising of this kind as the B.B.C. and the other members of the European Broadcasting Union. This was known at the time of the negotiations and taken into account when the final contract was settled between F.I.F.A. and the E.B.U.'<sup>75</sup>.

The question was still far away from its conclusion, though. On 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1965, during a meeting of the Organising Committee and within the discussion on

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3266/1 – 27 June 1966, Follows to Dimmock.

<sup>74</sup> Obviously a fee had to be paid to the owners of the grounds where the adverts would be placed.

<sup>75</sup> BBC WAC, R44/810 – 6 January 1966.



ground advertising, it had been reported that all clubs but one had agreed to the placing of visual advertising on their grounds. The exception was Sheffield Wednesday Football Club, which had different plans. At the end of the meeting it was decided that the club 'should be asked to accept the original offer and to fall in with the general plan'<sup>76</sup>. Thus, if we think of the letter already reported above in which, on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1965 (a few days before the Organising Committee meeting), McMillan informs Dimmock about the 'rumour' that FIFA was dealing with one Club to sell spaces around the ground for advertising purposes, it could be guessed that the club in question was Sheffield Wednesday FC. And when the general plan for ground advertising had to be abandoned because of the EBU's rejection, Sheffield Wednesday did not change their original plan.

The project of the club, probably, was to settle in 1965, well in advance of the beginning of the World Cup championship, a long-term contract so as to be allowed to display advertisements on its ground during the tournament one year later. The Consortium was probably aware of this project and so warned the FA to prevent Wednesday from putting the plan into effect. As an answer to this request Peter Dimmock received a letter from the Secretary of the FA almost three weeks before the World Cup opening game. In this letter Mr Follows tried to defend this cunning countermove by Wednesday to get around Article 10:

'Quite frankly I do not understand what the complaints are about. I have been quite clearly under the impression that if a Club, as a part of its normal practice, had ground advertising there was no obligation on the part of anybody to remove that advertising for World Cup matches. (...) I do not think that The Football Association is in a position to tell the Clubs that they

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<sup>76</sup> FA Archive, 'World Cup Organising Committee Minutes', 22 July 1965.

must break the contracts which they have entered into over a long period of time with their own local advertiser.’<sup>77</sup>.

Trying to reconstruct the events, from the evidence of the documentation and the TV and film pictures, it can be hypothesised that the FIFA or, more likely, a third company, or organisation, acting on behalf of the FIFA, negotiated, in the summer of 1965, with Sheffield Wednesday FC for the purchasing of ground advertisements for the World Cup matches to be held at Hillsborough (three 1/8 final and one 1/4 final matches). At that moment it was impossible to exactly know which kind of audience would watch the broadcasting of those matches throughout the world<sup>78</sup>. But when the draw put Switzerland (3 games), West Germany (1), Spain (1), and Argentina (1) to play their matches at Hillsborough, it was quite clear in which direction steps had to be taken to find customers interested in advertising spaces at that particular venue. Not only were Switzerland and West Germany the wealthiest countries among those participating in the tournament, but West Germany was also the one with the largest television audience in Europe, with two national networks operating, ARD and ZDF.

On 15<sup>th</sup> July 1966, when the World Cup championship was already four days old, Mr. Henrik Hahr, Director of the EBU Administrative Office, sent a telegram to Sir Stanley Rous, as President of the FIFA, and to Peter Dimmock, as chairman of the UK Consortium. The content of the telegram was that the EBU

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<sup>77</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3266/1 – 27 June 1966, Follows to Dimmock.

<sup>78</sup> As already said, at that time only England and Brazil were sure of joining the competition. England would surely play their matches at Wembley, while it was thought that Brazil, given their appeal, could play in the qualification group to be hosted in Liverpool, because of the bigger capacity of Goodison Park. All other participants would not be known before next autumn, and the draw to place the teams in the different qualification groups was held on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1966.



had been informed that advertisements for German goods, some of them even in the German language, had appeared at some of the World Cup grounds, and he demanded that Article 10 of the FIFA/EBU Contract 'be enforced immediately'<sup>79</sup>. Four days later, Mr. Miro Vilcek, on behalf of Swiss UNIVISION, in thanking Mr. Käser, Secretary General of the FIFA, 'for endeavouring to remove the advertisements', highlighted how 'commercial advertisements (Swiss Co-op stores) (...) where displayed on banners waved by spectators and were visible when the Swiss team was playing'<sup>80</sup>. Adverts were placed and shown on TV for Switzerland's first two matches. For the last match played at Hillsborough on the 19<sup>th</sup> July, between Switzerland and Argentina, the BBC/ITV Consortium sent a priority telegram to the Secretary & General Manager of Sheffield Wednesday Football Club, Mr. Eric Taylor<sup>81</sup>, which, after having pointed out how previous match advertising at Hillsborough had contravened Article 10 of the FIFA/EBU Contract, hoped that the Club 'will remove or cover up advertisements for future matches or place them out of immediate views of television cameras'<sup>82</sup>. It was not a matter of whether adverts were placed at the grounds, but if they were in immediate view of TV cameras. For instance, there were adverts at Ayresome Park too, but they were not placed immediately next to the pitch, being positioned on the stands.

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<sup>79</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3266/1 – 18 July 1966, Hahr to Dimmock.

<sup>80</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3266/1 – 18 July 1966, Käser to Dimmock.

<sup>81</sup> Eric Taylor was a General Manager well ahead of his times, being much more interested in the commercial side of football than his colleagues.

<sup>82</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3266/1 – 19 July 1966, BBC/ITV Consortium to Sheffield Wednesday FC.

According to the material gathered during this research it was impossible to find out any further development of the issue of ground advertising; nonetheless this is a matter worth being investigated more in detail.

### **‘A milestone in television’: the BBC coverage**

Even if the overall operation had been planned jointly, at the moment of the broadcasting itself it fell into four principal categories: BBC domestic operation, ITV domestic operation, programmes for Eurovision and Intervision, and programmes for the rest of the world. This study will present only the differences that characterised the British end of the operation, especially in regard to the different attitudes to programming of the BBC and ITV.

If it is considered that while the BBC screened about 53 hours of the World Cup, ITV limited its coverage to about only 23 hours, it is not so difficult to immediately spot the difference in attitude of the two networks. But before going straight to the presentation of these two different attitudes, it might be quite interesting to point out how television necessities played an important role in the overall organisation of the tournament and, particularly, in the scheduling of the matches.

Art. 6 of the FIFA/EBU contract stated:

‘The overall dates and details of organisation of 1966 World Championships shall be made known to the EBU not later than March 31<sup>st</sup> 1963 (...) The FIFA and the Football Association of England will collaborate with EBU or its Appointed Agent to work out dates for the 1966 Championships which shall be acceptable to all authorities concerned.’<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3266/1 – 14 April 1962, ‘Contract FIFA/EBU – World Football Championship 1966’.



This article gave the EBU and its appointed agents the chance to know well in advance date and hours of the matches in order to possibly intervene if those were not considered suitable with television needs. Thus, it happened that, due to the needs of the television services, there were changes for some matches to be played at Wembley Stadium. The changes were intended not only to 'avoid the showing on television of England's matches at the same time when other Eighth Final matches were being played, whereby the revenue from those matches might be reduced'<sup>84</sup>, but also to have the chance to televise some matches more, given the fact there would no longer be overlapping. The matches in question were the opening match, which was anticipated from the original date, Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July, to Monday 11<sup>th</sup>; the Mexico-England match, with the alteration of the kick-off time from 3pm to 7.30pm; and the Mexico-Uruguay game, with the alteration of the kick-off time from 7.30pm to 4.30pm. In this last case the alteration was evidently responding to the television necessity of broadcasting one more match, given that there was no overlapping with any England match, even though there were other three matches scheduled on that evening.

After this necessary introduction, let us go now to deepen the aspects immediately related to the programming both on the BBC and ITV.

'The BBC is to go "all out" in covering the 1966 World Cup'<sup>85</sup>. The BBC OB headquarters matured this concept since the very beginning of the operation and kept it clear in mind at the moment of fixing up the TV scheduling. If 18

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<sup>84</sup> FA Archive, 'World Cup Organising Committee Minutes', 9 March 1965.

<sup>85</sup> BBC WAC, E12/1002/1 – 1 July 1966.

hours of the programming had been dedicated to the broadcasting of the 1962 World Cup in Chile<sup>86</sup>, this time, due to reasons that have been already pointed out, the coverage would inevitably be much more extensive.

The first thing to highlight is the fact that the BBC chose to dedicate only one channel, BBC1, to the broadcasting of the World Cup, while BBC2 was kept free of football. This was done to give the audience a different option, especially in consideration of the fact that ITV was also covering the tournament. The programme that introduced the audience to the competition was *World Cup Challenge*, a series of three programmes about the preparation for the championship screened on the last three Tuesdays before the start of the Cup. The subject of the first programme was the preparation of the reigning champions, the Brazil squad, while the other two featured the presentation of the other main challengers and, obviously, of the host country. According to the BBC Audience Research department, the programme was generally agreed to be a worthwhile preview, and if there were some of the audience who thought that 'surely we are about to be subjected to enough football without having to watch this bore', the majority probably agreed with the remark of a Civil Servant who underlined how the programme enabled him 'to understand a little more of the problems involved'<sup>87</sup>.

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<sup>86</sup> 8 matches, obviously including all the matches played by England, were broadcast in full, but telerecorded. Besides, there was the broadcasting of the highlights of other important matches. The placing was in the evening: 'It is recommended that viewers should be invited to make a regular date with these World Cup films and if possible they should be shown at the same time each evening. Transmission at 10 p.m. is recommended'; in BBC WAC, T14/3265/1.

<sup>87</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3271/2 – 2 August 1966, 'Audience Research Report – World Cup Challenge'.



A curious anecdote related to the preparation of the first programme of the series, the one about the Brazilian team, is surely worth being mentioned. The BBC camera team filming the Brazilian footballers in training was in the middle of a little 'cold war' with Brazilian journalists and other authorities. Leslie Kettley, head of the BBC team, complained that 'police obstruction and other difficulties prevented him from doing his job properly', that 'he has been treated as a "spy for Alf Ramsey"', and that 'tyres of the team's van were deflated (...) one morning last week'<sup>88</sup>. On the other hand, Brazilian journalists complained that the Brazilian Sports Confederation gave 'unduly generous facilities to the British TV men' and that 'the British have been discourteous and demanding'. But

'happily, everything ended peacefully. And the English Journalists invited their Brazilian colleagues around a table with whisky on it (whose voice is louder) and fraternised with them all night, forgetting what had happened'<sup>89</sup>.

The climax of this route of approach to the tournament was reached on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July, on the eve of the opening match, when a 45-minute preview programme, called just *World Cup Preview*, set the scene at Wembley and at the other World Cup venues. Needless to say, the programme gathered large appreciation among the audience and was regarded as 'an excellent preview, (...), making it a bit easier to understand what all the fuss is all about'<sup>90</sup>.

Once the competition got started, one important piece of the BBC broadcasting was *World Cup Highlights*, which was transmitted on match nights and included edited recordings of all the day's matches, together with comments

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<sup>88</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3264/1 – 9 May 1966, Reuters.

<sup>89</sup> Translation from a Brazilian newspaper, in BBC WAC, T14/3271/2.

<sup>90</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3271/2 – 17 August 1966, 'Audience Research Report – World Cup Grandstand Preview'.

from leading football personalities at all the grounds. Not to lose touch with the Cup, another programme, called *World Cup Report*, was supposed to be broadcast on days when no matches took place in order to keep viewers up-to-date with the latest news and to inform them with previews of the matches to be played on the following day. But, as far as was possible to discover, this programme only took place once, on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July.

The centrepiece of BBC1 coverage was *World Cup Grandstand*, which was the programme that covered live the whole of one game on each evening and/or afternoon when World Cup matches were played. During the half-time break viewers had the chance to watch goals and highlights from all the other games on that night, and after the final whistle full reports on the evening matches were given, with the aid of video-tape recordings from a special World Cup Studio; besides, there were interviews from the grounds and analyses of the game using the newest technical devices such as slow-motion and stop-action camera.

The most important games, such as the opening match and the Final, received special treatment, being introduced well in advance in respect to the kick-off. For the 11<sup>th</sup> July match the BBC domestic broadcast started at 6.50pm, forty minutes before the scheduled kick-off, with the audience entertained by a series of interviews and the broadcasting of the whole Opening Ceremony, from the march of the participating countries to the presentation to the Queen of the players of the two teams, passing through the official speeches of the Queen and Sir Stanley Rous. The Final match broadcast started even earlier, having a two-hour time-span between the beginning of the programme and the kick-off. *World*



*Cup Grandstand* was broadcast at noon, with a preview of the match and the latest news of the teams. The programme set the Wembley scene, introduced the way the two teams had got to the last stage of the tournament, showed film of the players, and let the viewers feel part of the occasion by enjoying the Band of the Royal Marines. Considering that kick-off time was at 3pm and that, due to the extra-time, the match took almost two hours and a half to award England the Jules Rimet Cup, the BBC entertained its football enthusiasts with a programme that lasted almost six hours.

Despite the concerns of some Conservative MPs that 'sensed that there was a feeling in their constituencies'<sup>91</sup> that the BBC was overdoing the coverage of the competition, this full coverage of the Football World Cup represented a huge step forward in the coverage of major international sporting events, especially for football events. So far there had been great interest in the Olympic Games, but the Jules Rimet Cup had been languishing in a dark corner of the TV scheduling. Now, due to the important fact that the competition was organised in England and that the BBC was directly in charge of arranging its broadcasting facilities, the spectacle revealed all its potential and went straight to the centre of the stage, collecting its deserved applause: 'This was undoubtedly a splendid sporting spectacle. Few will now deny that the BBC was right to give it maximum coverage'<sup>92</sup>.

It has to be said that there were two main innovations, one of a technical nature and one involving the editing of the programmes, which can be considered

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<sup>91</sup> BBC WAC, T14/3264/1 – 30 June 1966, Dimmock to H.S.P.Tel.

<sup>92</sup> *The Listener*, 4 August 1966 (154).

as a fillip for sporting (but not only) programmes to come. The use of slow-motion was, probably, the major technical improvement that TV inherited from World Cup TV broadcasting. As Whannel points out, 'the end of the 1960s was a watershed for technical innovation as far as sport is concerned', and 'from the mid 1960s emphasis swung to developments that gave a greater ability to construct and to manipulate the basic elements'<sup>93</sup>. The opportunity of such an important outside broadcast development could not be missed by the BBC engineering staff for leaving their mark. In which direction did they have to move? What was the first need for a football enthusiast who wanted to enjoy on TV his favourite sport's most important contest? As pointed out in the *Radio Times*,

'in every soccer competition there is always something which happens so quickly that not even the sharpest and most experienced observers can be absolutely sure of what exactly took place.'<sup>94</sup>.

That was it! The BBC Design department invented a particular videotape-recording machine just for the Football World Cup. This machine was able to feed the portion of tape to be re-shown into a magnetic disc, which could make four images of each picture to give the slow-motion effect. The success of this new device was universal and immediate: 'those very quick flashbacks of goals scored left me quite breathless'<sup>95</sup>, one *Radio Times* reader wrote to the editor. Even the least enthusiastic viewers were really impressed by this new ability to give slow-motion pictures of crucial moments of the matches just a few seconds after they had happened. As it was written in the 'Independent Criticism of BBC Television'

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<sup>93</sup> Whannel, *Fields in Vision...*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>94</sup> *Radio Times*, 7 July 1966.

<sup>95</sup> *Radio Times*, 11 August 1966 (2).



pages of *The Listener*, ‘this sleight of hand with time (...) added an entirely new dimension’<sup>96</sup>. That was history of television in its making.

Another important innovation was the BBC editorial choice of supporting the usual commentators with a panel of football experts. The aim was to ‘interpret the World Cup scene for BBC-1 viewers’<sup>97</sup>. Therefore David Coleman, who was in charge of introducing *World Cup Grandstand*, and the remainder of the commentary team (which included Walley Barnes, Frank Bough and Alan Weeks along with Kenneth Wolstenholme) were put side by side with a team of soccer personalities. This ‘star team’ assembled by the BBC was joined by former World Cup captains, Billy Wright (manager of Arsenal and former captain of England), Johnny Haynes, (former captain of England), and Danny Blanchflower (former captain of Northern Ireland), together with club and national team managers, including Walter Winterbottom (former England team manager), Tommy Docherty (manager of Chelsea), Joe Mercer (manager of Manchester City), Don Revie (manager of Leeds United), Jimmy Hill (manager of Coventry City), and Ron Greenwood (manager of West Ham United). Besides these, there were two of the best English referees, Arthur Ellis and Ken Aston.

Each match covered by the BBC domestic programming, regardless of its importance, was commentated on by one of the five people of the BBC staff (Barnes, Bough, Coleman, Weeks, or Wolstenholme) joined in his task by one or more of the experts. For instance, Wolstenholme’s commentary of the match between England and Mexico was supported by the authoritative voice of Johnny

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<sup>96</sup> *The Listener*, 4 August 1966 (179).

<sup>97</sup> BBC WAC, E12/1002/1 – 1 July 1966.

Haynes; and the unbelievable victory of the unknown North Koreans over the Italian superstars was witnessed on TV thanks to the report shared between Frank Bough and Danny Blanchflower (who, incidentally, was particularly appreciated by the audience for 'his engaging Irish voice, his expert knowledge of the game, and his down-to-earth criticism and analysis'<sup>98</sup>). Favourite partner of Wolstenholme, for some of the most important matches of the Championship, was Walter Winterbottom; but for the Final tie he was joined by fellow commentator Walley Barnes. The *World Cup Grandstand*'s studio saw the presence of a couple of experts who had the role of helping David Coleman's introduction. Coleman's favourite guests were Ken Aston and Billy Wright.

The idea of enriching the normal commentary with the opinions of those experts paid off, being generally appreciated by the BBC audience and considered as a 'very good idea, adding much to viewers' interest in the matches and helping to explain the fine points of the game' by the majority of the people who enjoyed the BBC coverage<sup>99</sup>. That 'much' added to viewers' interest was not just merely technical, but also of entertainment value. As Garry Whannel points out, with most of the viewers in these kind of broadcasts not being sport fans, 'it is not only by producing an expert-oriented discourse addressing the cognoscenti that their attention can be won'<sup>100</sup>. This experiment made having a sporting TV

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<sup>98</sup> *The Listener*, 4 August 1966 (154).

<sup>99</sup> BBC WAC, T14/326471 – 17 August 1966, 'Audience Research Report'.

<sup>100</sup> Whannel/Goodwin, *Understanding Television...*, p. 110.



commentary without the accompaniment of an expert's opinion absolutely unthinkable<sup>101</sup>.

Of course there were some complaints of 'too much talking', as pinpointed by *The Listener*:

'Half an hour of verbal *ouverture* before the match must have short-changed the experts and bored the laymen; then there was another twenty minutes after the matches and, oh dear, it seemed much longer than that.'<sup>102</sup>.

But in the same article from which the above abstract has been selected, the BBC was acknowledged of having done the right thing in producing such a huge effort in covering and broadcasting the World Cup:

'Nevertheless the decision to devote five nights a week to the World Cup was triumphantly vindicated: the sheer skill and scale of the whole operation must be seen as nothing less than a milestone in television comparable to the BBC's discovery of how to achieve near perfection in the coverage of General Elections.'<sup>103</sup>.

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<sup>101</sup> Even if sometimes it will not be as successful as this experience, like in the case of the debated participation of former long jump Olympic champion Mary Rand as Coleman's assistant in the athletics for the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games. According to the Audience Research department her voice 'was too high' and 'she sounded nervous and "just not up to it"'. Besides a BBC viewer, Mrs Riley, wrote a strong letter of complaint forwarded both to Peter Dimmock and to the BBC chancellor, Lord Hill. In the letter we can read how this careful viewer complains that she would 'like to criticise the action of the BBC in employing Mary Rand at a reported fee of £2,500 (...). Being an outstanding athlete and an Olympic Gold medallist does not automatically confer her an ability to comment on athletics. What she had to say was of no value whatsoever to the viewing public; to me her remarks were merely irritant. I think that people who pay £6 per year for a television licence have legitimate grounds for complaint when the money of the corporation is squandered in this way.' The BBC defended the choice of Mary Rand, replying to Mrs Riley in another letter that 'when we decided to ask Mary Rand to be a member of our reporting team in Mexico we did so primarily not because we felt that with no previous experience she was likely to shine as a commentator, but rather that her great knowledge and experience of the Olympic Games and her very wide contacts in the athletic world would be a great asset to us. In fact, as you will have noticed, we did not use her very much as a commentator, but as we expected she did assist us a great deal in other ways.', BBC WAC, T14/2703/1 – 11 November 1968.

<sup>102</sup> *The Listener*, 4 August 1966 (179).

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

### Coronation Street, in spite of all: the ITV programming

As it has been already pointed out, the hours that ITV dedicated to the World Cup for its domestic programming were far less than the BBC's. In its attitude towards the tournament, Independent Television was 'brazenly chauvinistic'<sup>104</sup>, concentrating for live transmission just on the matches in which England were involved, plus two German matches versus Argentina and versus the USSR in the semi-final. So we have a total of about 16 hours of live coverage, to which must be added the hours of programming dedicated to recorded material, as the Sunday afternoon telerecordings and the highlights presented within the late night transmission of *Star Match*, the ITV's equivalent of the BBC's *World Cup Highlights*. If we consider the three Sunday scheduled telerecordings and the five editions<sup>105</sup> of *Star Match* (introduced by Eamonn Andrews), the number of hours dedicated to the World Cup on ITV rises to about 23, almost one third more than they were supposed to be, at least according to what had been initially planned ('Independent Television will screen only 16 hours of World Cup football, (...), Mr Billy Ward, the executive producer, announced last night'), but less than a half of what the BBC offered to its viewers. And they would have been even less if Ramsey and his lads had had a shorter life in the tournament, given that, besides the scheduled 16 hours, ITV kept to what they had promised a few days before the World Cup opened: 'We shall follow England throughout the competition and if they get into the quarter-final or semi-final, we shall cover them in full'<sup>106</sup>. Which

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<sup>104</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 11 July 1966 (10g).

<sup>105</sup> On 12, 13, 15, 19, and 20 July.

<sup>106</sup> *The Times*, 2 July 1966 (1b).



does not mean that if England had got into the Final they would not have televised the match, given that it had already been scheduled as a match to be broadcast.

However, the fact that ITV's will was not to follow the BBC's example of covering the whole competition had been made quite clear at the very beginning of the operation, since the skirmish about the withdrawal from the Consortium: 'doubts about the popularity of sport, in terms of attracting the biggest possible audiences, has always plagued Independent Television programme planners'<sup>107</sup>, the *Daily Telegraph* reported in presenting the television broadcasting operation early in July 1966. Besides, ITV planners knew quite well how unlikely it was to defeat the competitor in the 'sports arena', given the BBC's inescapable superiority, due to a long tradition of broadcasting sporting events, and given ITV's lack of a specific department dedicated to sport. The pursued policy provided a minimum coverage to justify the money spent in the Consortium, and offered an alternative choice to all the viewers who did not want to watch the football, keeping its schedule as close as possible to the daily usual norm. Just to give an example, it meant that throughout the whole competition *Coronation Street* was regularly broadcast twice a week on Monday and Wednesday at the usual hour, 7.30pm, apart from the episode originally scheduled on 11<sup>th</sup> July. On that occasion, due to its clashing with the opening match, in order to allow the broadcast of the opening ceremony, the popular serial was not cancelled but brought forward to 6.55pm, so that ITV started the transmission of the England-Uruguay match at 7.25pm, when the Queen, after the speech and the

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<sup>107</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 4 July 1966 (10).

presentation to the players, was already comfortably sitting in the royal box waiting for the match to start.

On the other two occasions (Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> and Monday 25<sup>th</sup> July) in which there would be the necessity to advance *Coronation Street*, the decision was to keep the serial at the scheduled hour and to start the transmission of the two matches in question, (one of which was, incredible to say, the England-France one), at 8 o'clock p.m., when the first half an hour of play had already gone. Probably the idea was to keep the same audience that had been watching the serial, largely made up of women, for the immediately successive football programme. In fact, unfortunately for ITV, this policy did not pay off in terms of audience, given that the *Coronation Street* Wednesday episode that clashed with the England-France match fell to 18<sup>th</sup> position in the usual order of the 'Top Twenty' list of programmes of the week, when it was used to have a place in the top five positions<sup>108</sup>. It is understandable that this was a way to keep the usual kind of audience, probably in order to suit advertisers' necessities; but certainly it was not the best way to challenge the BBC Sports department and to launch a new philosophy for ITV sporting programming.

### Shouting housewives

One issue that cannot be kept away from any analysis of the broadcasting of the 1966 World Cup is the one related to the huge audience figures that

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<sup>108</sup> The 'boomerang' effect affected the Monday episode too, even on an evening when there was no competition with a football match. For instance, the Monday episode, which usually headed the list, fell to fifth position on the 18<sup>th</sup> July, an evening when no matches were played. See *Daily Telegraph*, 30 July 1966 (9f).



characterised the television coverage<sup>109</sup>. If the number of viewers who watched the first matches in the World Cup in which England took part on both television networks was equivalent to almost half the English population aged five or more<sup>110</sup>, 'well over half the population of the U.K. aged five and over watched the World Cup Final on television last Saturday'<sup>111</sup>. To be more precise, the count made by the BBC Audience Research department showed that 26½ million viewers watched the match on BBC1 and 4 million on ITV, for a total of 30½ million<sup>112</sup>. These figures are impressive, and even if it is fair to point out that the BBC comedy series *Steptoe and Son* regularly drew audiences of over 50% in October 1964, and also that some special events, such as the televising of Churchill's funeral, had had audiences rivalling that of the World Cup Final, it is undoubted that 'there is little that can rival an actual big sporting event seen as it takes place'<sup>113</sup>.

The aspect that immediately strikes one is the huge number of people that have been spending their time in front of a TV set to watch the World Cup, no matter whether the England team were directly involved or not. It has been calculated that this massive coverage of the World Cup had, as more evident effects, an increase of time spent watching TV from a normal July level of about

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<sup>109</sup> The sources for the data regarding the audience are from: BBC WAC, T14/3264/1 – 17 August 1966; BBC WAC, T14/3271/2 – 2 August 1966; BBC WAC, T14/3271/2 – 17 August 1966; BBC WAC, T14/3271/3 – 1 August 1966; and BBC, *The Coverage of Sport on BBC Television*, London: 1974, pp. 13-18.

<sup>110</sup> 'What the five-year-old thought of it would be fascinating to know', *The Listener*, 4 August 1966 (154).

<sup>111</sup> BBC WAC, R44/810 – 3 August 1966.

<sup>112</sup> 'Whilst being much smaller than those for television, radio audiences were far from negligible, rising for the Final to 5%, or 2½ million', BBC WAC, T14/3264/1 – 17 August 1966, 'The World Cup. A Review of Audience Research Findings'.

<sup>113</sup> *The Listener*, 4 August 1966 (154).

11 hours 20 minutes per week to 13 hours 35 minutes, as well as a rise in size of the average audience from about 24% of the population to about 29%. Most of the increase was in the average audience watching BBC1, consequently swinging the BBC:ITV ratio from a normal 49:51 to about 60:40, the biggest span in favour of the BBC since the birth of Independent Television. On none of the eight occasions when ITV carried a live commentary did the commercial network attract more than one fourth of the viewers that watched at the same time the match televised by the BBC.

The explanation for this last piece of data has to be found in what it has already been talked about. Firstly, the BBC's authority in sporting broadcasting, and the relative youth of Independent Television in this area has to be considered. The BBC was the network that broadcast the major sporting events as well as the major state occasions, and this had given the Corporation a strong means of national identification, with the audience seeing it as the 'natural place' to watch these 'national' sporting events. Therefore, during the 1966 World Cup almost every viewer switched the TV on BBC1 because of the habit of watching sport on the BBC, especially when it was a major event. The BBC knew this situation and obviously tried to take as much advantage as possible out of that. The second reason, which is a corollary of the first one, is a natural consequence of the different time, strength and money bet on the World Cup coverage.

According to the BBC Audience Research department, on the nights when ITV did not carry live commentary, BBC1 audiences increased about two-and-half times above the normal audience for the same time-slot in the



preceding weeks. On the contrary, the ITV audience fell quite consistently. But the most interesting point is that ITV audience fell only to about three-quarters of the normal earlier level. This means that most of the enormous increase of BBC viewers (about 11 or 12 million) consisted of people who would not otherwise have watched TV at all at those hours. Moreover, the numbers watching World Cup recordings at 10.30pm or later amounted to more than 10% of the whole UK population. Thus, not only did the World Cup raise the number of persons viewing the early evening programmes, but it also seems to have kept people up till very late at night.

To go deeper into this analysis of the World Cup viewing audience, it is very fascinating to observe the viewing patterns related to sex, age and social class<sup>114</sup>. A very interesting aspect that emerges is related to the extraordinary involvement of women as a new factor within the audience for sports. Male viewers, as expected, outnumbered the female ones, especially in the early stages of the competition. Nonetheless, for the Final match the disparity between the proportions of the sexes viewing was notably narrower, if not, as happened with the ITV audience, with an inverted trend of women overtaking the men, probably because of the huge number of 'Coronation Street-addicted-women' who kept the TV set switched on most of the time on ITV (or it might also be that the ITV commentators' voices were more appealing to a female audience, who knows...).

Luckily the initial preoccupations, especially from the BBC side, about the reaction of British housewives towards this blanket coverage that would twist

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<sup>114</sup> Table 3 shows the complete picture of the audience viewing patterns.

their usual pattern of viewing ('some housewives, one understands, are complaining that the BBC is devoting too much time to the televising of the matches'<sup>115</sup>), came to nothing. Peter Dimmock himself was quite surprised by this unexpected reaction from the female audience:

'Housewives have begun to appreciate that football is not just 22 chaps kicking a ball about, but something involving a great deal of skill. A woman in front of me at Wembley on Tuesday was screaming "Hold it! Hold it!" when she thought one of our players was going to pass too early. She told me afterwards she had never been to a match before. She'd learned it all from the telly.'<sup>116</sup>.

Just to give further examples of this general involvement of women in being glued to the TV set as well as their husbands and sons, let us read some extracts from letters sent to Alf Ramsey after the end of the tournament:

'My husband and I arrived in England from Australia for short visit home. Glued to T.V. for every match of World Cup Series' – Signed letter.

'Although my husband, my father & son know a fair amount about the game, I'm afraid I know nothing, but I really must say again how I enjoyed the hours spent watching your team on the T.V.' – Mrs Jean Spencer.

'How extreme delighted we were to see Britain [*sic!*] win the Cup on our T.V.' – Mrs Maria Romans.

'Thank you for giving so much pleasure to all who have been able to watch all your games on T.V.' – Miss E. Fitzgerald<sup>117</sup>.

That new situation, involving an extraordinary percentage of women within the overall audience figures (the peak was reached for the Final, when 54% of female population watched the game on TV, whilst male percentage was 71%<sup>118</sup>), had probably as a consequence a change in the way of presenting the matches, adding to the usual technical commentary a rich series of stories and opinions that

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<sup>115</sup> *The Listener*, 30 June 1966 (936).

<sup>116</sup> Quotation from an unknown newspaper, in BBC WAC, T14/3264/1.

<sup>117</sup> FA Archive, 'Letters of congratulation to Alf Ramsey'.

<sup>118</sup> See Table 3.



were not just strictly related to what was actually happening on the pitch. Football players began to be seen also as human beings, rather than just as footballers. But not normal human beings, of course, because they were people with a private everyday life that had to be shared with the wider audience:

‘Others felt there was too much talk altogether. Again, it is sometimes said that one does not want to hear about the number of children a footballer (or cricketer or tennis-player) has or whether he eats bananas for his tea, and requires only an accurate description of what precisely is happening and who is who. But can any rate women viewers [*sic*] be tempted to watch unless such tit-bits of information are used to gild the lily?’<sup>119</sup>.

Even the way of televising the matches started to change, with the prying eye of the cameras trying to slip into the private side of the footballers’ life. In the specific case of the televising of the World Cup Final this *pruderie* got satisfaction by framing the ‘women of the heroes’ amidst the crowd: ‘was it not fascinating to see last Saturday evening the mother of the two heroic Charltons and the blonde wife of England’s triumphant captain?’<sup>120</sup>

Finally, it is very interesting to examine the social class of the viewers. Middle-class viewers were considerably less inclined to view the pictures and to listen to the commentaries than were those from the working-class. It is an well-known fact that the percentage of working-class viewers within the ITV audience was relatively higher than the BBC’s. On the other side, middle-class and elite viewers had a preference for the BBC. As a last note, the audience appears to be sufficiently equally distributed for what is related to the age groups, with a slight preference of the elderly for ITV.

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<sup>119</sup> *The Listener*, 4 August 1966 (154).

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

To summarise this brief analysis of the World Cup viewing audience in the UK, if we tried to draw a portrait of the typical viewer for both the BBC and ITV, we could say that while a 45-year-old middle-class man is the BBC viewer *par excellence*, a 60-year-old retired working-class woman could be the typical ITV enthusiast. It is very likely that this result would not be so different from the usual patterns of the television audience at that time.

### **‘Four hundred million can’t be wrong’**

Before closing this chapter on the televising of the 1966 World Cup, there is a point that has necessarily to be pointed out: the world-wide success of this TV operation. According to some credible sources, it can be affirmed that for the Final match there were

‘Four hundred million fans linked by cable, radio and that spinning, bleeping satellite Early Bird, glued, riveted, or otherwise trussed to their tellys, watching the Greatest Show on Earth’<sup>121</sup>,

as can be read in the *Daily Mirror*. ‘What an awful lot watching a football match’, was underlined in a leading article of *The Times* headlined ‘Four hundred million can’t be wrong’:

‘The gnomes of mass communication – if that might describe the backroom boys in this game that is every bit as international as the loading and offloading of sterling- must be preening themselves at their own world record on Saturday afternoon. Four hundred million viewers in four – or was it five? – continents were transfixed to their tellies watching twenty-two footballers. The last occasion when viewing on this world scale went on was during the funeral of a true world statesman –CHURCHILL. But Saturday’s figure exceeded that total by fifty million.’<sup>122</sup>.

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<sup>121</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 30 July 1966 (11).

<sup>122</sup> *The Times*, 1 August 1966.



This is, we think, an authoritative acknowledgement of a social event that must be regarded with the utmost interest, given that it was an irrefutable matter of fact that the worldwide broadcasting of the Football World Cup set a stunning audience world record.

The pictures to Europe, both for Eurovision and Intervision, were principally live, even if recorded matches were also shown, particularly when there were matches played contemporarily, like in the case of the quarter-finals. Programmes for the rest of the world were mainly on 16 mm film rather than on video-tape. Mexico (for the matches in which Mexico were involved, and for the Final match) and the USA (for the Final match) had the chance to be fed live transmissions through the 'Early Bird' satellite.

The complete list of all the 75 countries that joined the broadcasting of the 1966 World Cup, either live or tele-recorded, thanks to the EBU and the BBC/ITV Consortium was as follows:

- EUROVISION:

ARD West Germany (1<sup>st</sup> Television Service); BRT Belgium (Belgian Flemish); CLT Luxembourg; DR Denmark; JRT Yugoslavia; NRK Norway; NTS Holland; ORF Austria; ORTF France; RAI Italy; RTA Algeria; RTE Eire; RTB Belgium (Belgian Walloon); RTM Morocco; RTP Portugal; RTT Tunisia; SRG Switzerland (Swiss German); SRT Sweden; SSR Switzerland (Swiss French); TSI Switzerland (Swiss Italian); TVE Spain; YLE Finland; ZDF West Germany (2<sup>nd</sup> Television Service).

- INTERVISION:

BT Bulgaria; CST Czechoslovakia; DFF East Germany; MT Hungary; TSS U.S.S.R.; TVP Poland; TVR Rumania.

- REST OF THE WORLD:

ABC Australia; Aden; Argentina; Barbados; Bermuda; Brazil; Canada; Chile; Colombia; Cyprus; Ethiopia; Ecuador; Greece; Honk Kong; Iran; Iraq; Jamaica; Japan; Kenya; North Korea; South Korea; Kuwait; Malaysia; Mauritius; Mexico; New Zealand; NBC New York; Peru; Philippines; Rhodesia; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; Sudan; Trinidad; Tunisia; United Arab Republic; Uganda; Uruguay; Venezuela.

Analysing the final report from the Consortium, there are some interesting curiosities that are worth being pointed out. For instance, among the Eurovision countries only West Germany broadcast all the matches, either live or video-recorded<sup>123</sup>. The opening match was broadcast live in all the Eurovision and Intervision countries save Finland. The two Semi-finals and the two Finals were relayed live in all the Eurovision and Intervision countries. Semi-finals and Finals apart, the matches that stimulated most interest, especially in East Europe, were the ones in which Brazil were involved. Intervision countries showed more interest in the Hungary and Bulgaria games than in the USSR ones. RTP of Portugal, in spite of the successful campaign of Eusebio & Co., was the organisation that broadcast the least number of matches (9, but all live), while Finland had the lowest figures in terms of live programmes (only 6). The

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<sup>123</sup> On ZDF, the 2<sup>nd</sup> national service; ARD, the first television service in West Germany, televised only the West Germany matches and the other most important games. The two German networks made extensive use of their own video-recording facilities in London.



organisations that televised the highest number of live matches were all from Intervision, with TSS of USSR being the service leader in this special 'hit parade' with 17 matches broadcast live (followed by Belgian BRT, Dutch NTS, East German DFF, Czech CST and Polish TVP, with 14).

As far as the rest of the world is concerned, in South America both Argentina and Brazil transmitted all the 32 matches (Argentina in 16 mm, Brazil in Video-tape<sup>124</sup> and 16 mm), but none of them live. Mexico (15 matches, 4 live), Chile (18) and Peru (7) broadcast their programmes in video-tape and had their own commentary position on site. In Africa, Sudan relayed in 16 mm all the 32 matches of the competition. Rhodesia, in spite of the total ban on exports to that country, was able to buy from the BBC and relay 16 mm pictures of 16 matches<sup>125</sup>.

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<sup>124</sup> Only the 1/8 finals games in which Brazil or Portugal were involved, with commentary position on site.

<sup>125</sup> 'A television recording of part of the World Cup series of Association football matches has been sold and dispatched to Rhodesia by B.B.C. Television Enterprises, the B.B.C. said. Government Departments were at a loss to explain how this export had slipped through the sanctions controls. The Commonwealth Relations Office could not comment. Government sources say there is an almost total ban on exports to Rhodesia, except for printed matter and humanitarian supplies. The best explanation offered was that the programme might remind Rhodesia of their isolation from the world.', *The Times*, 11 August 1966 (10c).

**Table 1 – BBC/ITV Consortium Estimate of Cost**

	<i>Estimated Total Cost</i>	<i>To be shared</i>	
		<i>BBC</i>	<i>ITV</i>
Commentator’s Equipment – Units and Monitors	£114,000	£57,000	£57,000
EBU Contract – Fee	£52,580	£34,180	£18,400
World Cup Television Operation Centre	£81,245	£40,623	£40,622
Grounds	£12,706	£6,353	£6,353
Regional Commentator’s Bureaus and Information Centres	£8,100	£4,385	£3,715
Sound and Vision Circuits	£28,225	£14,113	£14,112
Broadcasts Office White City	£3,200	£1,600	£1,600
Brochures	£600	£300	£300
Travel and Duty Expenditure	£3,000	£1,500	£1,500
Hospitality	£1,000	£500	£500
Miscellaneous	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000
Contingency 10%	£30,665	£16,155	£14,510
Add 10% rising cost factor	£33,732	£17,770	£15,962
<i>Estimated Cost Magnitude</i>	<i>£371,053</i>	<i>£195,479</i>	<i>£175,574</i>

(Source: BBC WAC, T14/3266/1)



**Table 2 - World Cup 1966: Potential Television Audience**

	<i>Interested Countries</i>	<i>Receivers in use (Dec 1964)</i>	<i>Receivers Estimates (July 1966)</i>
<i>Western Europe</i>	Austria	520,000	585,000
	Belgium	1,250,000	1,400,000
	Denmark	925,000	1,100,000
	Finland	500,000	641,000
	France	4,250,000	5,500,000
	W. Germany	9,200,000	10,100,000
	Great Britain	14,300,000	15,000,000
	Ireland	195,000	260,000
	Italy	4,454,000	5,300,000
	Luxembourg	13,500	25,000
	Malta	20,000	27,000
	Netherlands	1,564,900	1,900,000
	Norway	292,000	408,000
	Portugal	117,500	152,000
	Spain	1,000,000	1,250,000
	Sweden	1,869,300	2,000,000
	Switzerland	368,400	493,000
	Yugoslavia	210,000	440,000
<i>Eastern Europe</i>	Bulgaria	66,200	122,000
	Czechoslovakia	1,610,000	1,900,000
	E. Germany	2,378,900	2,750,000
	Hungary	471,000	685,000
	Poland	1,300,000	1,700,000
	Romania	246,000	330,000
<i>Rest Of The World</i>	North America	-	69,700,000
	Australia	2,032,000	2,250,000
	Nigeria	-	15,000
	Guatemala	45,200	50,000
	Jamaica	10,500	16,000
	Mexico	1,000,000	1,000,000
	Panama	40,000	40,000
	Honk Kong	25,000	40,000
	Arabia (Kuwait)	10,000	30,000
	Saudi Arabia	16,000	20,000
	Philippines	80,500	70,000
	Argentina	1,305,000	1,500,000
	Brazil	7,040,000	2,200,000*
	Chile	31,000	30,000
	Ecuador	12,000	8,000
	Uruguay	130,000	120,000

\*: In this case there must have been a misprinting in the report. The figure should be 7,200,000.

(Source: BBC WAC, T14/3277/1)

**Table 3 - Audience Viewing Patterns**

	<i>First Tuesday</i>		<i>Final</i>		<i>Final</i>	
	<b>BBC1</b>		<b>BBC1</b>		<b>ITV</b>	
	sub-group %	Audience composition	Sub-group %	Audience composition	sub-group %	Audience composition
<u><i>Sex</i></u>						
Men	44	65	63	56	8	47
Women	21	35	45	44	9	53
<u><i>Age</i></u>						
5-7	16	3	41	5	7	5
8-14	35	12	61	12	11	13
15-19	32	7	44	6	9	8
20-29	31	13	58	15	5	8
30-49	36	32	56	32	8	28
50 & over	31	33	51	30	10	38
<u><i>Social Class</i></u>						
A	22	3	61	6	1	1
B	30	24	57	25	5	13
C	34	73	52	69	10	86

(Source: ‘Audience Research Report’, 17/08/1966; in BBC WAC, T14/3264/1)



## Conclusion

At the end of this analysis of the organisation of the television broadcasting of the 1966 World Cup, what conclusions can be drawn and which are the key points worth being highlighted? First of all it has to be pinpointed how, under the point of view of the overall organisation of the tournament, the aspect relating to the television coverage was always kept in the highest consideration. As soon as the organisation of the event got started, television was considered a necessary element and, for instance, the grounds selected were chosen on their suitability to meet the demands of television; meanwhile, television authorities influenced the scheduling of the matches.

Secondly, from a more decidedly television point of view, four key points have to be emphasised:

1) The BBC strengthened and consolidated its supremacy in terms of organisation and audience figures in televising sporting events; in such a context of strong competition in which the audience ratio was always in favour of the commercial network, outside broadcasting of sports was the safety area and the launching pad for a extraordinary success. On the other hand, ITV, despite the clear defeat, learnt fruitful teachings from this experience: a) a precious technical and professional collaboration with the BBC; b) the definitive realisation of the necessity of setting up a central sports department to support and gradually replace the regional ones, with the aim of being able to compete for the major sporting events and producing television coverage without the faults and the

inexperience that had so far characterised the sports broadcasting of the commercial network.

2) Talking about technological innovations, the broadcasting of this sporting event led the BBC to produce and develop the slow-motion machine. If it is considered that two years later, for the broadcasting of the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, the outside broadcasting department of the BBC, in order to produce the best coverage ever of a sporting event, would make the maximum utilisation of satellite transmission for live pictures and would push their researcher to build a new 'colour converter', it can be seen how the television of sporting events can be considered an engine of technological development.

3) Regarding the editing of the commentaries, it cannot be forgotten the way the BBC used a remarkable team of experts supporting the commentators, giving the starting signal for their common utilisation within sports TV broadcasting by both the BBC and ITV in order to back their commentators with authoritative voices within the world of football itself; the other side of the coin was that, as highlighted by Neil Carter, those 'panels helped to legitimise managers not only as experts, reaffirming their professional identity, but also turning them into TV personalities'<sup>1</sup>.

4) Last, but not least, as far as the audience figures and patterns are concerned, in 1966 for the very first time the TV broadcasting of football, as well as of sports in general, was no longer just a male business, but managed to draw the attention of a larger number of women, destroying the stereotypical idea that

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<sup>1</sup> Carter, *The Football Manager...*, p. 118.



televised sports were 'the preserve of men'<sup>2</sup>. This new trend would be confirmed and reinforced already two years later for the TV broadcasting of Mexico City Olympics, when the women will represent a huge factor within the overall audience figures<sup>3</sup>.

There is, finally, another aspect that must not be forgotten, the one regarding ground advertising. Despite the fact that on this occasion all the attempts to have adverts at the grounds in immediate sight of the video-cameras were vain, the football authorities learnt an important lesson and, given the huge success in terms of world audience figures, understood how economically important in the future the connection with advertising will be and how to develop the commercialisation of football.

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<sup>2</sup> See: O'Sullivan, 'Television Memories...', pp. 176-177.

<sup>3</sup> See Chisari, Fabio, 'An Armchair Seat at the Olympics. BBC Television and the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games', *The Sports Historian*, 22 (2) 2002, pp. 11-12.

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# *Appendix*

***Cock (BBC) to Rous (FA) on  
England v. Scotland International and  
FA Cup Final,  
22<sup>nd</sup> February 1938  
(BBC WAC, T14/1323)***



Reference: PPV/UAC

22nd February, 1938

Private & Confidential

Dear Mr. Rous,

I am so sorry to bother you again by asking you to refer to my letter of December 10th last. In this we asked for permission to televise the England v. Scotland International Match, and the Cup Final.

Time is passing, and I should be most grateful if you could raise the matter once more with your Committee. I should be only too glad personally to try to satisfy any doubts that may still exist. If permission were obtained, it would not be regarded as a precedent, but as a trial. We are absolutely confident that no ill effect could be caused on the attendances at other matches taking place on those days. I trust the Committee will look upon the proposal broadmindedly.

Unfortunately it is not possible to give you exact figures. Our transmissions can be received normally within 25 miles of Alexandra Palace, though actually there are some sets outside that range. I think I am right in saying that there are not more than 2,000 sets installed in homes at this time. We should prohibit by notice any attempted reproduction in places of public entertainment, in case there should be any question of this being done.

S. F. Rous, Esq.



2.

22nd February, 1938

Would you be so kind as to let me know that our hopes are not to be shattered at any rate this year!

Television is on trial. Here is the beginning of a great new industry, the progress of which depends to a great extent on the co-operation of institutions such as the Football Association.

Kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

E. A. O'NEIL

S. F. Rous, Esq.,  
The Football Association,  
22, Lancaster Gate,  
W.2.



***BBC internal circular on technical  
arrangements at Wembley Stadium for  
England v. Scotland International and  
FA Cup Final,  
26<sup>th</sup> March 1938  
(BBC WAC, T14/1323)***



*Wembley*

INTERNATIONAL SOCCER AND CUP FINAL VISION O.B.s.

26th March, 1938

F.I.C. O.B.s. London

S.E.(S)

Copy to:

Tel. Ex.

At a meeting with the Wembley Stadium Authorities at Wembley on the 23rd March with Mr. Dorré, Mr. Lloyd and myself, the following final arrangements were agreed upon for the International Soccer on the 7th April and the Cup Final on the 30th April.

The Scanning van will stand at the top right hand end of the royal tunnel and the Translating van between the Stadium electrical power substation and the Stewards' dressing room. The substation will supply our Translating van with 20 KW. 415 V. 3 phase, at a charge to us of 3d. per unit, it being understood that we shall need this power on the day before the match in each case for test purposes, as well as on the match days.

The tripod and dipole aerial will be erected on the flat terrace roof between the north east and north west towers. This roof is 80 ft. from ground level.

One camera will be in the searchlight box under the roof of the north stand at a height of approximately 60 ft. from the ground. A second camera will be placed on a rostrum, 8 ft. high, hard up against the wall of the ground entrance to the running tunnel in the north west corner of the ground. A third camera will be placed either (a) on the Stewards' box which is in front of the Royal box and approximately 10 ft. high from the ground, (subject to our coming to a satisfactory arrangement with the News Reel Companies who, in the ordinary way, occupy this roof), (b) by the centre gangway of the Press gallery which is right at the back of the seating of the north stand.

In the case of the International match, the Mobile Unit will arrive at Wembley on the morning of Friday, 8th April and depart on the evening of Saturday, 9th April. In the case of the Cup Final, the Mobile Unit will arrive on the morning of Thursday, 28th April and will leave during the evening of Saturday, 30th April.

The distance from Alexandra Palace is 7 miles.

MCJL/ECB

*McSherry*  
for F.I.C. O.B.s. London.

*M*



*The first League/BBC contract for  
highlights of League matches,  
14<sup>th</sup> September 1956  
(BBC WAC, T14/448/1)*



Football League Negotiations

# THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

HEAD OFFICE: BROADCASTING HOUSE, LONDON, W.1

TELEVISION CENTRE: WOOD LANE, LONDON, W.12

TELEPHONE: SHEPHERDS BUSH 1030 \* TELEGRAMS & CABLES: BROADCASTS, TELEX, LONDON

35/PD.

14th September, 1955.

Dear Mr. Howarth,

Exclusive contract for film and/or telerecording  
excerpts of Football League matches Season 1955/56

Further to our discussions yesterday, may I please confirm that we would very much like to accept your Committee's offer and that the terms and conditions would be as follows:-

1. The BBC Television Service would be granted exclusive television rights for the Season 1955/56 so far as filmed or telerecorded excerpts of Football League matches were concerned and subject to the following conditions:-
  - (a) A total of up to 75 matches during the Season and not more than three matches on any one Saturday.
  - (b) Each film or telerecorded excerpt not to exceed five minutes per match, or in exceptional circumstances, a maximum of ten minutes.
2. These filmed excerpts to be included in a Saturday night sports programme in the Television Service. This programme is expected to run 30 or 40 minutes, including all sports and depending upon the circumstances each week.
3. It is part of this Agreement that the Football League will not permit any film or telerecorded excerpts of Football League matches during the 1955/56 Season to be shown on commercial television.
4. While we would not have any objection to any of the commercial cinema newsreel companies filming League matches, it is part of this Agreement that they would be specifically told that they could not subsequently sell or dispose of their film, in any way whatsoever, for showing on commercial television.
5. ~~We would appreciate a goodwill assurance that we will be given first refusal to renew this Agreement for the 1956/57 Season.~~

For the above facilities we would pay an inclusive sum of £5,000 (Five thousand pounds).



If your Management Committee are kind enough to accept these terms, we would be most grateful if you could sign and return the acceptance copy of this Agreement.

Yours sincerely,

*Peter Dimmock*

Peter Dimmock  
Head of Television Outside Broadcasts.

I accept these terms and conditions.

Signed... *F. Howarth* ...

Date... *15th September 1955* ...

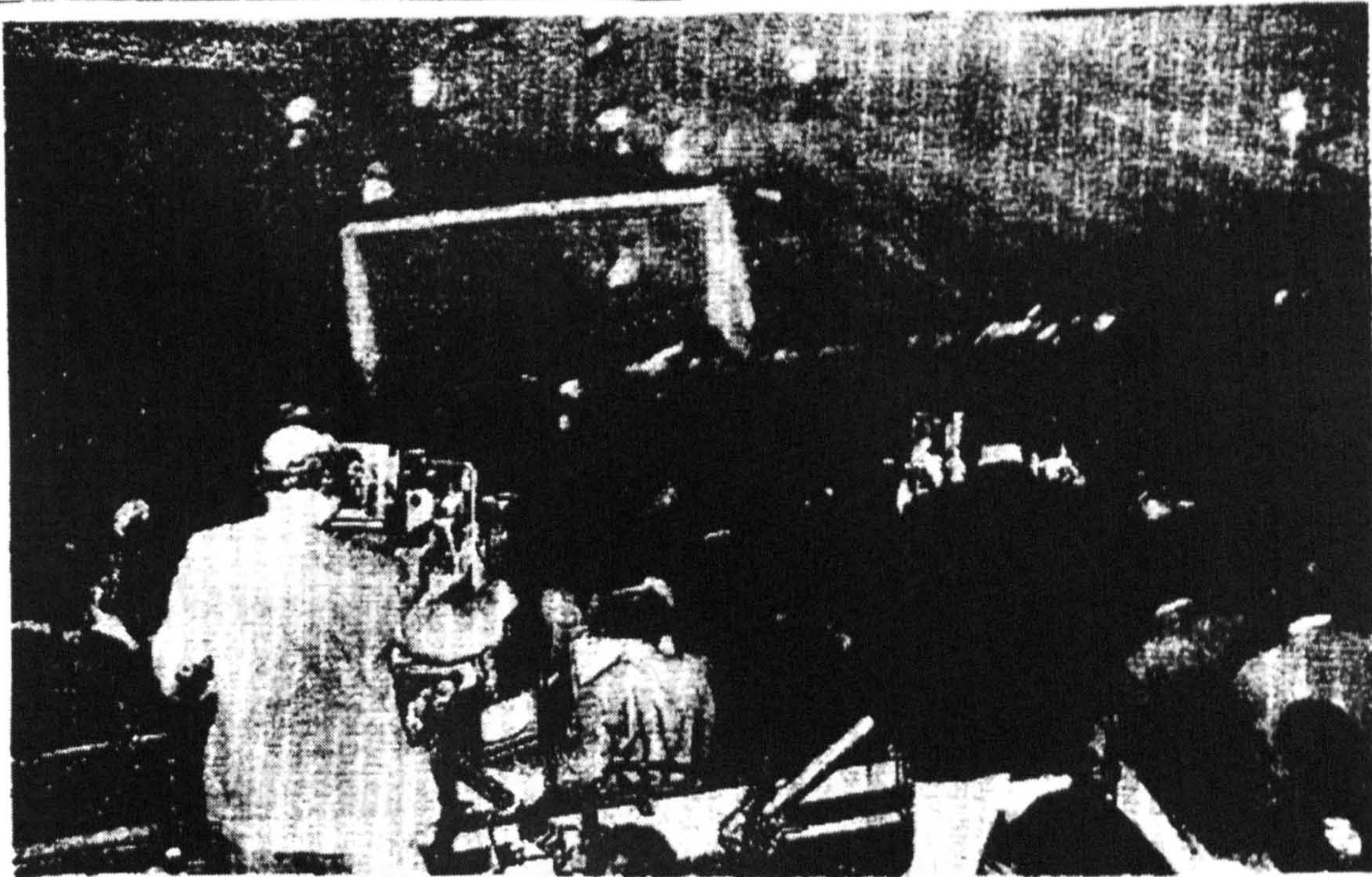
F. Howarth, Esq.,  
The Secretary,  
The Football League Ltd.,  
6, Starkie Street,  
PRESTON.



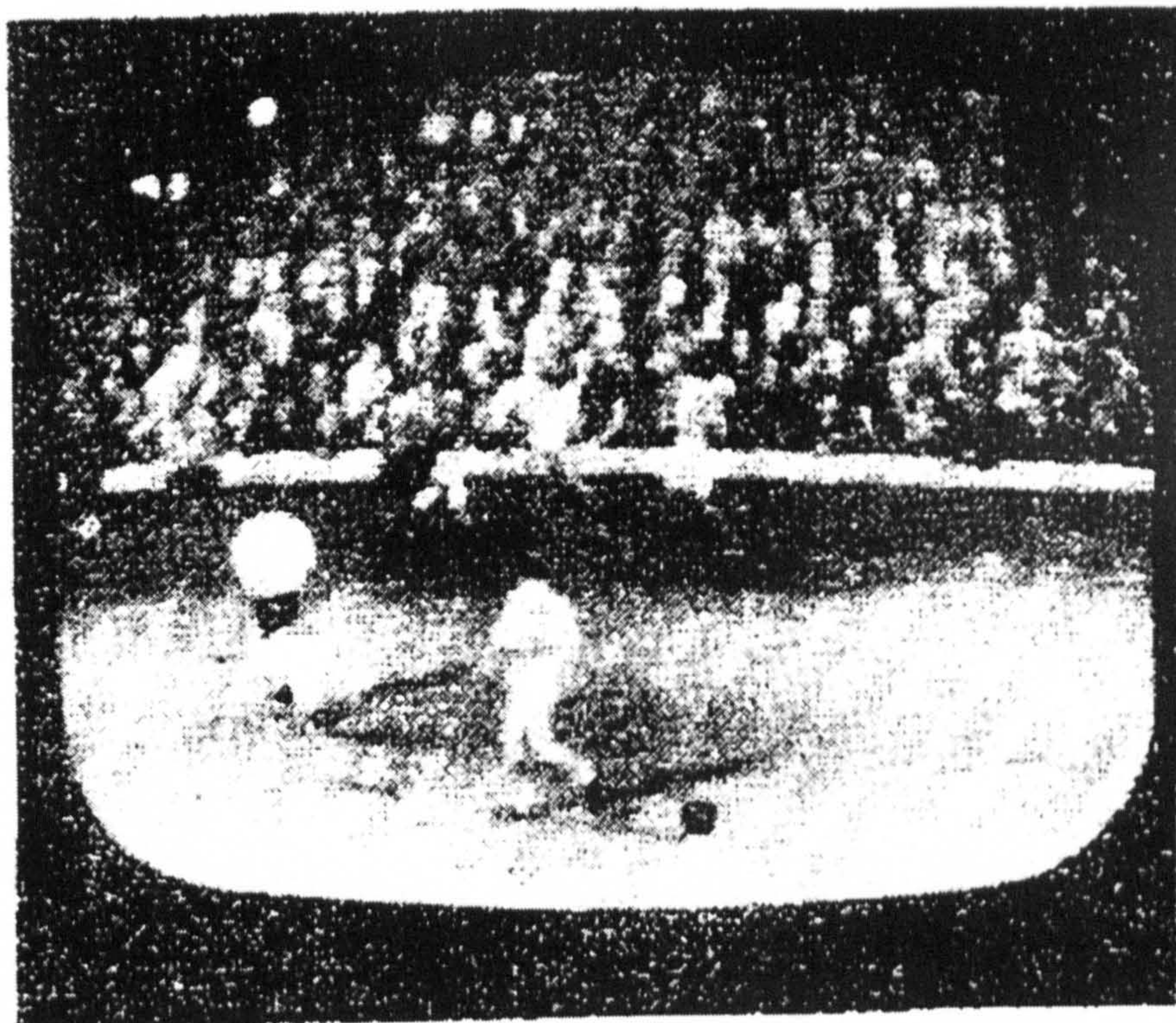


*The first League match 'live' on ITV,  
10<sup>th</sup> September 1960  
(West Lancashire Evening Gazette, 12/09/1960)*





**TV CAMERA TEAM AT WORK.**—The television cameras in operation at the back of Spion Kop during the "live" broadcast of the Blackpool v Bolton Wanderers match, played under floodlights at Bloomfield-road, Blackpool.



*How it appeared on the television at home.*



***EBU-UEFA Agreement:  
‘Guiding Principles for Co-operation  
between Television and Football’,  
October 1960  
(BBC WAC, E18/415)***



EBO  
- 10.6

Guiding Principles for Co-operation between  
Television and Football

1. A live broadcast of a football match constitutes a show of considerable appeal on television and implies the payment of a reasonable consideration to the organiser of the match. At the same time, it also represents one of the best forms of publicity for the game.
2. A televised live broadcast of an important football fixture has little or no effect on attendance at the match, but it may heighten the risks associated with bad weather and influence the gate receipts at matches of lesser importance that are scheduled at the same time in the country where the broadcast is taking place. The television authority and the national football association must therefore keep each other informed of their plans so as to minimise the adverse effects of such competition.
3. The televising of a football match is conditional upon authorisation being given by the national or international association under whose auspices the match is organised. In the case of relays of matches played abroad and in order to avoid the competition mentioned in the previous paragraph, the television authority will inform its national football association of such relays beforehand with a view to working out some mutually satisfactory arrangement. Such an arrangement will, however, never involve any payment whatsoever in this case.



4. Co-operation between the organisers of matches and the television authorities is necessary to make the live televising of important matches possible. Both parties should endeavour to reach agreement so that these "publicity" matches are played on dates and at times that do not clash with other fixtures.
5. It rests with the organiser of a match to decide whether the whole match can be broadcast, or whether the authorisation to televise should be limited to the second half. In the latter event the fee will be only two-thirds of that normally payable for a whole match of the same importance.
6. The fees payable for a deferred broadcast will be smaller than for a match of the same importance that is televised live.
7. The organiser of a match that is televised with his permission indemnifies the television organisations taking the broadcast against any claims that may be made on them because of the broadcast by any third parties, such as players, spectators, the owner of the ground, the clubs concerned, etc.
8. It is common ground that every television organisation may, by virtue of the right of free access to news which it can assert in the fulfilment of its mission, broadcast in its newsreel programmes free of charge filmed sequences up to nine minutes in length of any match. As such transmissions are a valuable advertisement for football, organisers should provide facilities for obtaining the necessary coverage.



9. The co-operation referred to in paragraph 4 above should include the establishment in each country of a list of fixtures that will be televised from grounds located in that country. Such a fixture list, in final form, should be ready sufficiently far in advance to enable the scheduled broadcasts to be actually put on the air.
10. The football fixtures likely to be televised fall into three classes, viz.:
- (a) matches organised under the auspices of UEFA itself (i.e. the European Champion Clubs Cup, the European Cup, the Inter-continental Cup and other matches of an international character);
  - (b) matches organised under the auspices of a national association, the televising of which is a matter for negotiation between the association and the television organisation in the same country;
  - (c) matches in the Preliminary Round of the Olympic Football Tournament and the World's Cup, the televising of which is a matter for discussion between the two co-ordinating bodies, i.e. the EBU and the UEFA.
11. The present contract between the EBU and the UEFA relates to the matches in only one of the championships organised by the UEFA. There are, however, others, as mentioned under paragraph 10 (a) above.



12. For the purposes of these Guiding Principles it is placed on record that the EBU co-ordinates Eurovision programmes and that the UEFA, a co-ordinating body, controls the national football associations.
  13. With respect to those matches which are not organised directly under UEFA auspices, any agreement between the EBU and the UEFA can only be general in character, indicating the general clauses for contracts to be entered into at the national level and recommending the negotiation procedure to be followed at that level.
  14. The changing nature of television necessitates frequent liaison between the EBU and the UEFA, who must keep one another informed of new championships likely to have public appeal, so that they can in turn inform their respective memberships.
  15. The Secretary-General of the UEFA has authority to negotiate with the EBU arrangements for the televising of the Final of the European Champion Clubs Cup, the televising of the European Cup and the Intercontinental Cup, and the televising of re-plays on "neutral" grounds in the championships run by the UEFA.
-



***Dimmock (BBC) to the League on state  
of negotiations,  
4<sup>th</sup> November 1960  
(BBC WAC, T14/1447/4)***



F.A.

# THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

HEAD OFFICE: BROADCASTING HOUSE, LONDON, W.1

TELEVISION CENTRE: WOOD LANE, LONDON, W.12

TELEGRAMS & CABLES: BROADCASTS, LONDON, TELEX \* INTERNATIONAL TELEX 22182

TELEPHONE: SHEPHERDS BUSH 8000

## PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

4th November 1960

The BBC is very anxious about the present situation vis-à-vis negotiations for association football on television because we have always been greatly concerned about the best long term interests of sport in general. Over the years we have always tried in the field of major sport to ensure that our agreements have been to the benefit of the sport concerned as much as to our viewers. Against this background we feel that we must express again to you the views that we have held consistently since I originally wrote to your Club on 14th July 1956.

We firmly stick to our opinion that League matches should NOT be televised on a Saturday and that in the best interests of football, televised matches should be carefully selected and restricted in number.

For this reason we welcomed the setting up, largely at the instigation of your League Secretary, Mr. Alan Hardaker, a joint Television Committee representing the Football Association, the Football League, the BBC, and the Independent Television Programme Companies. The stated terms of reference of this Committee were to control the amount of live television and to share it on a rota basis between the BBC and the Independent Companies. We were, therefore, puzzled when Mr. Hardaker informed us in July that the League Management Committee were prepared to negotiate directly for exclusive television rights to League Football. At that time we were naturally under the impression that such negotiations would be disclosed to the Television Committee, but as you know this was not the case and a great deal of misunderstanding arose.

We have informed the League Management Committee that the BBC is prepared to pay as much per match - and in the case of F.A. Cup matches, rather more - than the reported offers from Independent Television. We would be prepared also to enter into arrangements for compensation. If joint negotiations are restored the BBC is perfectly willing to consider the withdrawal of its offer for F.A. Cup matches altogether

continued over...



or for them to be included in a 'rota' pool either separately or combined with League, or League Cup matches. The pool scheme has always seemed to us to be the most sensible way to handle live television of football and thus avoid the obvious dangers of televising too many matches.

In view of all that has happened and the conflicting reports that have appeared in the press, we feel that the only way to restore confidence all round would be for a pool scheme to be negotiated for the season 1961-2 between your Management Committee, the BBC and the Independent Television Programme Companies, with the knowledge of the Television Sub-Committee. There would then be time for such a proposed agreement to be considered at Board Meetings by the Directors of all the League clubs before anything was ratified, and any element of a rushed or insufficiently considered agreement would be eliminated.

In this way too it should be possible to set aside before the season begins an agreed number of definite television dates while still allowing a degree of flexibility for a number of matches to be covered ad hoc as at present. Such a scheme would, we believe, be not only financially advantageous to League football but also in its best long term interests.

We have had considerable correspondence with Mr. Hardaker since our original letter to him dated 22nd April about the possible ITV scheme, but what we need now is some guidance as to what you, the clubs, really want to achieve in the way of a controlled amount of live television of League football. Although our formal negotiations for football must continue to be through the joint Television Committee and your Management Committee, we would always be pleased informally to have your views at any time.

(Peter Dimmock)  
Head of Television  
Outside Broadcasts



***Oaten (BBC OB Sports Organiser) to  
Dimmock (BBC OB Head) on Follows  
(FA Secretary),  
26<sup>th</sup> May 1965  
(BBC WAC, T14/1447/4)***



26 MAY 1965

FROM: Sports Organiser, Television OBs.

26th May 1965

SUBJECT: FOOTBALL : THE F.A.

CONFIDENTIAL

TO: G.M.C.B.Tel.

We have got to recognise, first and foremost, that Follows is exploiting a situation which has been made to measure for him in his battle with the Football League. We are the tools and it is unfortunate that one or two of our actions have provided him with a whipping boy to pursue his personal vendetta.

Follows has got one or two incontestable facts against us and has started off blindly to bring the League to heel by using them. What happens to us in the process does not, for the moment, worry him; indeed, we are, I am sure, regarded as in the League's Camp and therefore fair game to be sacrificed to the greater good of football as the F.A. see it.

We cannot counter-attack in a straight-forward fight. As you will have seen from the paper I did at your request, it is not possible to pin the F.A. down and prove where they have been at fault in not observing agreements to which we, perhaps far too willingly in the past, have become parties. I feel we have to make a clean break and, either, have an entirely new arrangement which is fairer to television or, as you want to do, have separate dealings.

I think the time has come to say bluntly to Follows that we can no longer operate television of football and be fair to the game and the public under present conditions. By this I mean:

1. Agreements which are changed and tightened up whenever the Football authorities feel like doing it.
2. The enormous difficulties under which we have to work, even within the existing agreements. Add to this the inefficiencies which result in situations like the attempt to ban the West Ham European Cup Final. (Note: Let us not forget that it was Hardaker who wanted to do this but delays at the F.A. produced the situation).
3. We want a clear definition of the constitution of any Television Committee with whom we deal, its authority and terms of reference. Above all an agreement that such a committee will deal promptly and fairly with matters placed before it. There must be no further chance for the misinterpretations of the past nor for the committee to manipulate television entirely one-sidedly in favour of football.
4. It can be argued on our behalf quite fairly that the one overriding factor we have always acted upon is that television of football shall not be allowed to interfere with other matches at the same time. The logic of this is unassailable; but where is the logic in banning Sunday afternoon matches when no other games are on? Where is the logic in banning a Cup Final recording which has already been seen 'live' two hours earlier?

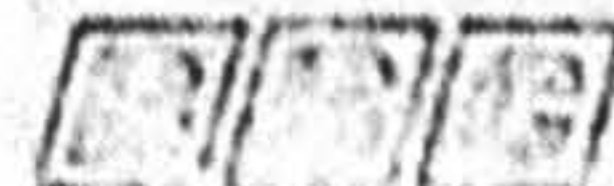
Let us be prepared to admit we were wrong to try to do this agreement; but at the same time let us point out that we are in an atmosphere in which agreements to this sort of thing can properly argued cases and not just dismissed on a whim of Football political reasons.

*Jack Oaten*  
(Jack Oaten)



***League-BBC Agreement for recorded  
highlights of League matches in the  
1969/70 season,  
28<sup>th</sup> April 1969  
(BBC WAC, T42/32)***





BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION  
KENSINGTON HOUSE RICHMOND WAY LONDON W14  
TELEPHONE 01-743 1272 TELEGRAMS BROADCASTS LONDON TELEX  
CABLES BROADCASTS LONDON-W1 TELEX 22182

35/08/HO

28th April 1969

Dear Mr. Hardaker,

Agreement between the Football League Ltd. and  
the British Broadcasting Corporation for recording  
Football League matches in the 1969/1970 season

This is to confirm with the Management Committee of the Football League our agreement on the following terms and conditions:-

1. The British Broadcasting Corporation is granted the exclusive rights for recordings of selected Football League matches on thirty (30) Saturdays spread throughout the season 1969/1970. The season is regarded as starting on Saturday August 9th 1969 and ending on Saturday April 4th 1970. Should either of these two dates be changed by decision of the Management Committee of the Football League then it is agreed that the terms of this agreement shall refer to any amended dates which may be decided. It is understood that the use of the term recording in this agreement refers to filming or recording by any other means.
2. The recordings may be transmitted in the form of an edited report up to a maximum of 45 minutes in length. Transmission may be at, or any time after, 10.00 p.m. on the day the matches are played and on either BBC-1 or BBC-2 but not on both Channels on the same night.
3. The choice of the games to be recorded shall be made by the British Broadcasting Corporation, subject always to the agreement of the Football League and as far as possible the BBC will give to the League one month's notice of the matches it has chosen so that the League may inform the Clubs. It is, however, agreed, that when problems of promotion and relegation make a choice of match difficult the League will accept late decisions.
4. The Football League agrees that the number of matches the BBC may record on any one Saturday covered under this agreement shall not exceed six. The transmission of these matches, subject to the over-riding conditions as to total length and timing as set out in paragraph 2 above, shall take place as follows:-
  - (a) One of the matches will be transmitted on all relevant BBC transmitters at an approximate length of 35 minutes.
  - (b) The other five matches will be allocated on a Regional basis and transmitted recordings will not exceed ten minutes in each case.

By Regional basis is meant those Regional areas which the BBC transmitter system permits and which consist of:-

    - (i) The North Region (including Lancashire, Yorkshire and the North West and North East of England).
    - (ii) The Midland Region (including East Anglia).
    - (iii) The West Region (including parts of Sussex, Hampshire and the West of England.)
    - (iv) Wales.
    - (v) The South East of England including London.

Cont'd.....



5. The Football League and the British Broadcasting Corporation are agreed that out of a total of 30 matches which the Corporation is entitled to record under the terms of 4(a) above, twenty three (23) shall be between teams playing in the First Division, five (5) from the Second Division and two (2) from the Third and/or Fourth Divisions. In order to simplify the choice of matches and to avoid a clash of choices with ITV it is agreed that the BBC and ITV will arrange to choose matches on an alternating basis month by month. The matches chosen under this system will be submitted to the Football League for final approval.

It has been agreed between the BBC and ITV that choice of matches will be made on the following basis:-

- (i) In those months when the BBC has first choice the BBC will pick "Match of the Day". ITV will then make three selections after which the remaining games will be chosen by alternation.
- (ii) When first choice belongs to ITV they will pick three matches and the BBC will follow with its "Match of the Day". Remaining games will be chosen by alternation.
- (iii) In the case of BBC Regional matches the Corporation will follow the principle that it will not select a Regional match from the county which is already supplying the "Match of the Day". For geographical reasons this is not possible in the South East area. Here, if the "Match of the Day" is to come from the London area the South East regional match will be a South East team playing out of the London area.

*h programme area*  
*A.H.*

In the event of any dispute arising over questions of selection of matches the decision of the Football League shall be final.

6. It is agreed between us that the recordings to be shown on Saturday evenings shall be exclusive to the BBC and that subject to para 10 below, no recording of Football League matches shall be allowed on ITV on Saturday.
7. The British Broadcasting Corporation accepts the wish of the Football League that the Radio Times billings of these match excerpts shall not, for the time being, contain the names of the teams playing. It is, however, agreed that announcements of the match to be screened can be made after 4.00 p.m. on the day.
8. For the above facilities the British Broadcasting Corporation agrees to pay to the Football League a total fee of £100,000 (one hundred thousand pounds). This total fee includes any disturbance allowance which the Football League may decide to pay to the Clubs. Additionally it includes the cost of the provision of any facilities at the grounds chosen to accommodate BBC cameras, commentators and any other broadcast equipment required, including the cost of any seats which may be rendered unsaleable. The BBC will be responsible for all costs of television installations. Payment of the fee shall be made as follows:-

£30,000	on August 1st 1969
£35,000	on December 31st 1969
£35,000	on April 4th 1970

Should the BBC wish to record any Football League matches on Saturdays over and above the total of thirty (30) stated in para 1 above then the Football League agree it may do so under the same conditions. The fee to be paid shall be on a pro-rata basis of £3,333.6s.8d. per Saturday.

Cont'd.....



9. The Football League undertakes to notify all Clubs concerned that the BBC shall be allowed to occupy the most advantageous positions for the purposes of making recordings on condition that the BBC shall use its best endeavours to interfere as little as possible with the view of spectators. This shall be decided by negotiation between the BBC representative and the authorised representative of the Home Club.
- 10.(a) It is a term of this agreement that all television news organisations (including BBC Television News, Independent Television News, newsfilm agencies and syndicated newsfilm services and their subscribers) will be permitted to show up to two minutes of film in any one scheduled news bulletin provided that the showing of such film is confined to regularly scheduled news bulletins. The Football League agrees with the BBC that, subject to limitations of space, reasonable facilities for this purpose will be made available for newsfilm cameras to operate at the event.
- (b) The BBC would not have any objection to the Football League permitting any of the cinema newsreel companies to film events but it is a term of this agreement that the Football League will obtain an undertaking in writing from such companies not to show the film or dispose of it for showing in the transmissions of ITV at the time of the event or subsequently in any way whatsoever.
11. The Football League agrees not to use the television broadcasts and not to authorise or permit them to be used either directly or indirectly for the purpose of advertising any commercial product or concern before, during or after the television broadcasts.

May I thank you and members of the Management Committee for your help in concluding this agreement with the Football League.

Perhaps you would be kind enough to confirm your agreement to the above by signing and returning the enclosed copy of this letter at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

*Bryan Cougill*

(Bryan Cougill)  
Head of Sports Programmes  
Television Outside Broadcasts

A. Hardaker Esq.,  
The Secretary,  
The Football League Limited,  
Lytham St. Annes,  
Lancashire.

I accept the above proposals  
on behalf of The Football  
League Limited.

Signed:

Date:

HBR



***League-BBC Agreement for recorded  
highlights of League matches in the  
1970/71 season,  
30<sup>th</sup> April 1970  
(BBC WAC, T42/32)***





BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION  
KENSINGTON HOUSE RICHMOND WAY LONDON W14  
TELEPHONE 01-743 1272 TELEGRAMS BROADCASTS LONDON TELEX  
CABLES BROADCASTS LONDON-W1 TELEX 22182

35/OB/PD

30th April 1970

Dear Mr. Hardaker,

Agreement between the Football League Ltd  
and the British Broadcasting Corporation  
for recording Football League matches in  
the 1970/1971 season

This is to confirm with the Management Committee of the Football League our agreement on the following terms and conditions:-

1. The British Broadcasting Corporation is granted the exclusive rights for recordings of selected Football League matches on thirty (30) Saturdays spread throughout the season 1970/71. The season is regarded as starting on Saturday August 15th 1970 and ending on Saturday May 31st 1971. Should either of these two dates be changed by decision of the Management Committee of the Football League then it is agreed that the terms of this agreement shall refer to any amended dates which may be decided. It is understood that the use of the term recording in this agreement refers to filming or recording by any other means.
2. The recordings may be transmitted in the form of an edited report of the match play action up to a maximum of 45 minutes in length. Transmission may be at, or any time after, 10.00 p.m. on the day the matches are played and on either BBC-1 or BBC-2 but not on both Channels on the same night.
3. The choice of the games to be recorded shall be made by the British Broadcasting Corporation, subject always to the agreement of the Football League and as far as possible the BBC will give to the League one month's notice of the matches it has chosen so that the League may inform the Clubs. It is, however, agreed, that when problems of promotion and relegation make a choice of match difficult the League will accept late decisions.
4. The Football League agrees that the number of matches the BBC may record on any one Saturday under this agreement shall be three. The transmission of these matches, subject to the over-riding conditions as to total length and timing as set out in paragraph 2 above, shall take place as follows:-
  - (a) One of the matches will be transmitted on all relevant BBC transmitters at an approximate length of 30 minutes.
  - (b) A second match will also be transmitted on all relevant BBC transmitters to fill the balance of the total time of 45 minutes of actual play allowed as stated in paragraph 2 above, i.e. to an approximate length of 15 minutes.
  - (c) The Football League agrees that of the two matches which form the subjects of (a) and (b) above the BBC is permitted to decide, after the games have been played, which it will use as the main match in its transmission and which is to be the subsidiary match.
  - (d) The third match referred to above is allocated on a Regional basis only in Wales. The Football League agrees that the BBC in Wales may choose from within its own transmitter area a match on each of the thirty Saturdays which will be transmitted in the Welsh programme area only in place of the match referred to in (b) above which the rest of the relevant BBC transmitters will broadcast. In the event that the BBC in Wales are unable for technical reasons to record their own match or no suitable match is available all relevant BBC transmitters will broadcast a programme consisting of the matches selected under (a) and (b) above, including those in Wales. This special facility for the BBC in Wales shall be the subject of an additional payment as set out in paragraph 8 below.



5. The Football League and the British Broadcasting Corporation are agreed that out of the total of 30 matches which the Corporation is entitled to record and transmit under the terms of 4(a) above twenty-three (23) shall be between teams playing in the First Division, five (5) from the Second Division and two (2) from the Third and/or Fourth Divisions. In order to simplify the choice of matches and to avoid a clash of choices with ITV it is agreed that the BBC and ITV will arrange to choose matches on an alternating basis month by month. The matches chosen under this system will be submitted to the Football League for final approval.

It has been agreed between the BBC and ITV that choice of matches will be made on the following basis:-

- (i) In a month when BBC has first choice
- (a) The BBC will nominate one match
  - (b) ITV will nominate three matches
  - (c) Remaining choices by alternation
- (ii) In a month when the ITV Companies have first choice
- (a) ITV nominate one match
  - (b) BBC nominate one match
  - (c) ITV nominate three matches
  - (d) Remaining choices by alternation

In the case of the BBC's second match under 4(b) above the Corporation will continue to follow the principle that it will not select this match from the area which is also supplying the main match in 4(a) above.

In the event of any dispute arising over questions of selection of matches the decision of the Football League shall be final.

6. It is agreed between us that the recordings to be shown on Saturday evenings shall be exclusive to the BBC and that subject to para.10 below, no recording of Football League matches shall be allowed on ITV on Saturday.
7. The British Broadcasting Corporation accepts the wish of the Football League that the Radio Times listings of these match excerpts shall not, for the time being, contain the names of the teams playing. It is, however, agreed that announcements of the match to be screened can be made after 3.45 p.m. on the day.
8. For the above facilities the British Broadcasting Corporation agrees to pay to the Football League a fee of £100,000 (one hundred thousand pounds) for the matches in 4(a) and (b) above and an additional sum of £3,000 (three thousand pounds) for the "opt-out" match for BBC in Wales. These fees include any disturbance allowance which the Football League may decide to pay to the Clubs. Additionally it includes the cost of the provision of any facilities at the grounds chosen to accommodate BBC cameras, commentators and any other broadcast equipment required, including the cost of any seats which may be rendered unsaleable. The BBC will be responsible for all costs of television installations. Payment of the fee shall be made as follows:-

£30,000	on August 1st 1970
£ 3,000	on August 1st 1970 in respect of the matches in Wales
£35,000	on December 31st 1970
£35,000	on April 4th 1971

Should the BBC wish to record any Football League matches on Saturdays over and above the total of thirty (30) stated in para.1 above then the Football League agrees it may do so under the same conditions. The fee to be paid shall be on a pro-rata basis of £3,333.66 per Saturday for the main matches and £100 per Saturday for any match in the BBC's Welsh transmitter area.

Cont'd.....



The Football League undertakes to notify all Clubs concerned that the BBC shall be allowed to occupy the most advantageous positions for the purposes of making recordings on condition that the BBC shall use its best endeavours to interfere as little as possible with the view of spectators. This shall be decided by negotiation between the BBC representative and the authorised representative of the Home Club.

10. (a) It is a term of this agreement that all television news organisations (including BBC Television News, Independent Television News, newafilm agencies and syndicated newafilm services and their subscribers) will be permitted to show up to two minutes of film in any one scheduled news bulletin provided that the showing of such film is confined to regularly scheduled news bulletins. The Football League agree with the BBC that, subject to limitations of space, reasonable facilities for this purpose will be made available for newafilm cameras to operate at the event.
- (b) The BBC would not have any objection to the Football League permitting any of the cinema newafilm companies to film events but it is a term of this agreement that the Football League will obtain an undertaking in writing from such companies not to show the film or dispose of it for showing in the transmissions of ITV at the time of the event or subsequently in any way whatsoever.
11. The Football League agree not to use the television broadcasts and not to authorise or permit them to be used either directly or indirectly for the purpose of advertising any commercial product or concern before, during or after the television broadcasts.

May I thank you and the members of the Management Committee for your help in concluding this agreement with the Football League.

Perhaps you would be kind enough to confirm your agreement to the above by signing and returning the enclosed copy of this letter at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

*Bryan Cowgill*

(Bryan Cowgill)  
Head of Sports and Events Programmes  
Television Outside Broadcasts

A. Hardaker Esq.,  
The Secretary,  
The Football League Limited,  
LYTHAM ST. ANNES,  
Lancashire.

I accept the above proposals  
on behalf of The Football  
League Limited:-

Signed: *[Signature]*  
Date: *[Date]*

KER



***FIFA-EBU Contract for  
1966 World Cup TV rights,  
14<sup>th</sup> April 1962  
(BBC WAC, T14/3266/1)***



CONTRACT — FIFA/EBU  
World Football Championships 1966

An Agreement made on 14th April 1962 between the FIFA, the world governing body for Association Football (acting in conjunction with the Football Association of England),

of the one part,

and the EBU acting <sup>on behalf</sup> of its European zone members as listed in Annexe A to this agreement,

of the other part,

WHEREBY IT IS AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

ARTICLE 1

The FIFA recognises the principle that all broadcasting organisations covered by this agreement in Annexe A have the right freely to make without payment direct or deferred non-commercial sound broadcast of all matches in the World Football Championships in England in 1966.

ARTICLE 2

It is part of this agreement that all television organisations throughout the world have the right to free access, subject to limitations of space, for obtaining material for use in regular scheduled news bulletins without payment for rights. It is agreed that all television organisations have the right to show up to two minutes of film, but only in regular scheduled news bulletins of any or all of the matches played in the World Football Championships covered in this agreement.

*Lesu*



ARTICLE 3

It is part of this agreement that the EBU is granted an option for the 1966 World Football Championships as follows:

(i) The FIFA grants to the EBU an option for the exclusive and unrestricted 'live' television, television film and recording rights of the 1966 World Cup in Great Britain for the organisations listed in Annexe A for use on their own networks.

(ii) This option must be exercised by the EBU not later than 1st June 1963 on the following terms:

a) The total payment to FIFA for the rights contained in this agreement shall be £ 300'000 (three hundred thousand pounds sterling).

b) If the EBU takes up the option on June 1st 1963 a first deposit of 10% of the total fee, i.e. £ 30'000 on that date, hereafter the EBU shall make further payments in advance as follows: 10% on June 1st 1964, a further 10% on June 1st 1965 and on June 1st 1966 a further 20%, i.e. £ 60'000. The balance of the fee, i.e. £ 150.000, shall be payable within 30 days of the conclusion of the World Championships.

c) In the event of the World Football Championships being postponed or the venue changed for any reason or in the event of any major change in the normal character of the Championships, the option exercised under this agreement remains valid and shall apply to the new dates & location unless the EBU shall give the FIFA notice in writing, within thirty days of being informed in writing by the FIFA of the changes, that the EBU wishes to cancel the option, in which case the FIFA shall repay to the EBU any sums already paid by the EBU under (ii) (b) above.

*Dis*

*Ear*

*Plan*



- 3 -

(iii) The FIFA agrees that in the event of requests from any television organisations other than those listed in Annexe A for Television rights to the matches, these requests shall first be discussed between the FIFA or their delegated agent and the EBU or one of the organisations listed in Annexe A appointed by the EBU to act on its behalf in this instance (hereinafter described as Appointed Agent).

It is further agreed that any fees paid for such additional television rights, after the deduction of any expenses incurred by the EBU (e.g. operational, distribution costs, etc.) directly attributable to the exercise of these rights, including the provision of video tape or film recordings, shall be divided equally 50%50% between the FIFA and the EBU.

(iv) In the event of the ratio between the £ sterling and the "Gold Franc" at the time of signature, varying by five per cent or more at any time during the life of this agreement, it is agreed that either party may request the other to consider a corresponding re-adjustment of the fee mentioned in this Article. This re-adjustment shall apply only to that portion of the fee that has not been paid by the time that this clause may be invoked.

#### ARTICLE 4

(i) The EBU or its Appointed Agent alone is hereby authorised to effect by its own means and, if necessary, by those of other broadcasting organisations the visual and sound coverage for the broadcasts contemplated in this agreement at all stadia where matches will be played.

(ii) To this end the EBU or its Appointed Agent and the FIFA represented by the Football-Association of England, in this case shall as soon as may be possible

*For EBU* 



prepare and agree a plan for the technical operation of television of the Championships, such plan to be known as Annexe C and to form an integral part of this agreement. The FIFA undertakes that the Football Association of England will afford the EBU or its Appointed Agent the first refusal of all available facilities required under this agreement.

- (iii) The EBU or its Appointed Agent shall constitute an international pool of operators, technicians, producers and commentators, as may be found necessary, which shall be accredited by the EBU to the FIFA and to the Organising Committee of the Football Association of England which is responsible to FIFA for the arrangements of the Championships.

#### ARTICLE 5

It is a term of this agreement that in organising the matches to <sup>be held</sup> ~~be held~~ the 1966 World Championships the FIFA and the Football Association of England agree to use their best endeavours to ensure that the following arrangements shall be made:

- a) In the case of the 1/8 finals not more than four matches shall be played on any one day and, if there are more than two, arrangements shall be made to stagger the K.O. times of the others and to ensure that the playing times do not overlap so that not more than two matches of the 1/8 finals shall be played at any one time on any day.
- b) In the case of the Quarter finals not more than two of the four matches shall be played on any day and the K.O. times of these matches shall be staggered and steps taken to ensure that actual playing times do not overlap.

*Handwritten signature*



- c) In the case of the semi-finals only one shall be played on one day.

#### ARTICLE 6

The overall dates and details of organisation of the 1966 World Championships shall be made known to the EBU not later than march 31st 1963 in order that it may consider them before taking up the option. It is agreed that the FIFA and the Football Association of England will collaborate with the EBU or its Appointed Agent to work out dates for the 1966 Championships which shall be acceptable to all authorities concerned.

#### ARTICLE 7

The EBU undertakes to order its operations so as not to interfere with the normal course of the Championship matches covered by this agreement. For its part the FIFA guarantees that the Organising Committee of the World Championships in England shall undertake to see that no third parties may impede the exercise of the rights and activities of the EBU in carrying out the terms of this agreement. Equally the FIFA guarantees that the EBU is covered against any claims which may be brought against any of the Organisations listed in Annexe A by third parties (e.g. players, spectators, etc.) on account of the rights exercised under this agreement.

#### ARTICLE 8

In the event of the FIFA (or the Football Association of England on behalf of FIFA) granting the cinematograph film rights for the 1966 World Championships to third parties the FIFA agrees to ensure that a written undertaking is obtained by it or the Football Association of England to the effect that any such film taken of the whole or part of any of the matches covered by this agreement shall not at any time whatsoever be released for use on television in those countries covered by the Organisations listed in Annexe A.



ARTICLE 9

It is an integral part of this agreement that the FIFA, representing all National Football Associations in the countries covered by this agreement, recognises and guarantees to the EBU that within the countries named in Annexe A to this agreement no restrictions whatsoever shall be applied to the live television broadcasts of the matches in the 1966 Championships in England.

Any deferred transmissions shall be notified to FIFA sixty days in advance. Otherwise any such transmission shall be subject to prior permission being obtained from FIFA. No deferred transmission shall take place after thirty days from the termination of the Championships unless explicitly authorised by FIFA.

It is however agreed that material from the transmissions is freely available in excerpt form up to nine minutes in length per broadcast to any of the organisations covered by this agreement for use at any time. In the case of a review of the year type sports programme the limit is extended up to twenty minutes.

ARTICLE 10

\* 6653-21-1  
The FIFA agrees not to use any of the television broadcasts and not to authorise or permit them to be used by third parties either directly or indirectly for the purpose of advertising any commercial product before, during and after the television broadcasts.

ARTICLE 11

This contract is drawn up in English and French. It is agreed that the English version shall prevail in the event of dispute and ~~that~~ any such dispute shall if unresolved be referred under English law to three mutually agreed and neutral Arbitrators.

Signed at Zurich on 14th April 1962

On behalf of the FIFA

On behalf of the EBU

*[Signature]*

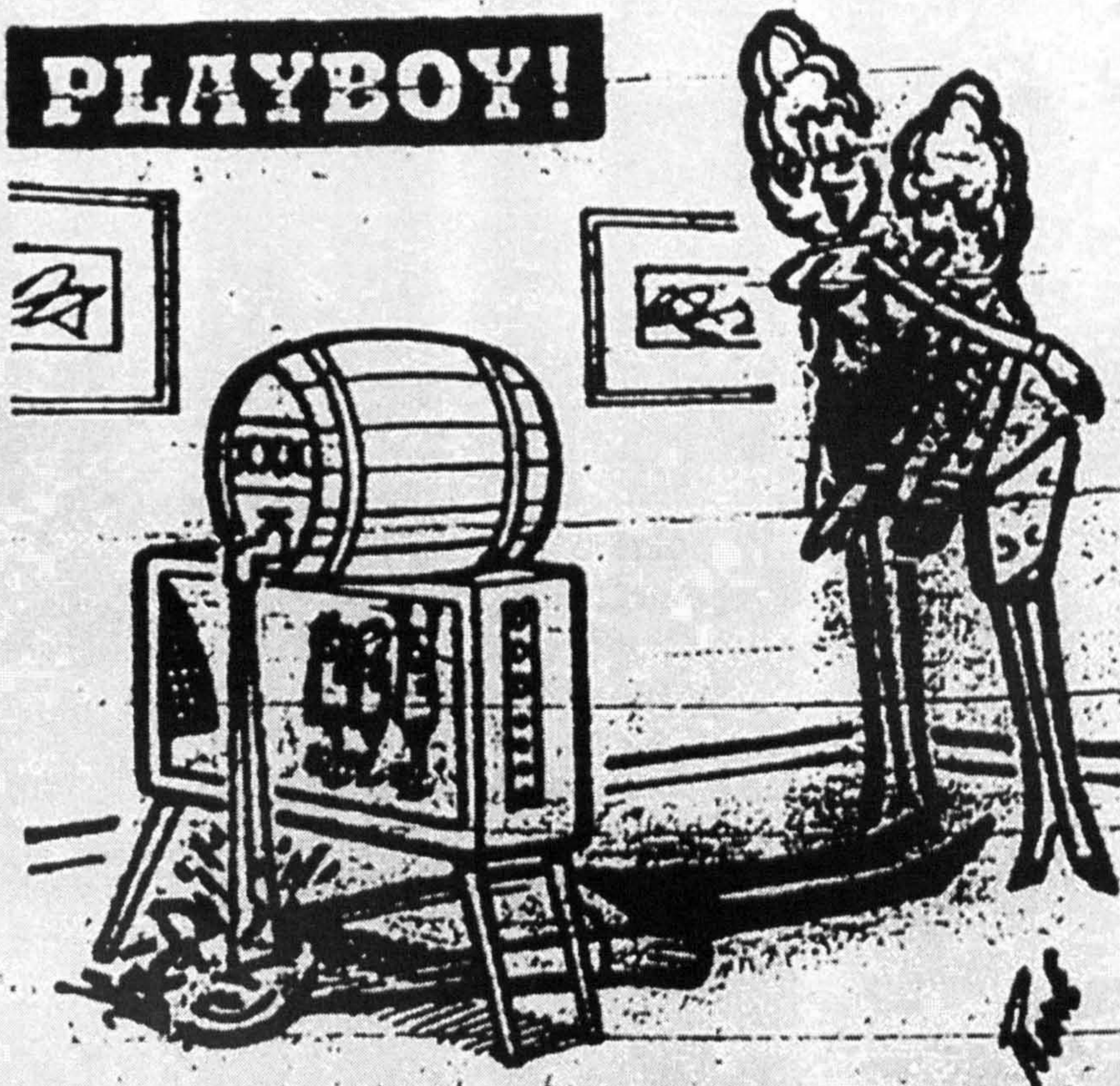
*[Signature]*



*Cartoon from the  
Daily Mirror,  
July 1966*



**PLAYBOY!**



**"Let him have his little celebration,  
Mother—it isn't every day we get into  
the World Cup Final!"**



*Rilegato presso  
Centro Fotocopie, Dattilografia,  
Legatoria, Tipografia, Cartoleria  
di Concetta Boschetto  
Via Crociferi, 66 – Catania  
Tel./Fax 095 313721*